

AN ANAGRAM OF IDEAS
ON ART, FORM AND FILM

by MAYA DEREN

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Maya Deren's four 16 mm. films have already won considerable acclaim. Convinced that there was poetry in the camera, she defied all commercial production conventions and started to make films with only ordinary amateur equipment. Her first, **MESHES OF THE AFTERNOON** (1943), was made with her husband Alexander Hammid, whose films — **FORGOTTEN VILLAGE**, **CRISIS**, **HYMN OF THE NATIONS** (Toscannini) and others — reveal also that devotion to the poetry of vision which formed the common ground of their collaboration. When other work claimed his time, Maya Deren went on by herself — conceiving, producing, directing, acting, (being unable to afford actors) photographing (when she was not in the scene) and cutting. Through all the trials of such shoe-string production, which included carrying equipment for miles to the location, she had only the assistance of another woman, Hella Heyman, as camerawoman. Yet three more films were made: **AT LAND**, **A STUDY IN CHOREOGRAPHY FOR CAMERA** (with Talley Beatty) and **RITUAL IN TRANSFIGURED TIME**, thus proving that fine films could be made "for the price of the lipstick in a single Hollywood production." Her heroic persistence has just been rewarded by a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship. Moreover, the reputation of the films has spread so that performances at the Provincetown Playhouse were completely sold out and they have also been shown in colleges and museums throughout the country.

In this pamphlet Maya Deren's approach to film reflects not the limited scope of a professional craftsman, but a broad cultural background—a profound interest not only in esthetics generally and in psychological insight, but in physics and the sciences as well. Russian-born, daughter of a psychiatrist, Maya Deren attended Syracuse University, where she first became interested in film, and received her B.A. from New York University and her M.A. from Smith College, both degrees in literature.

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CONTENTS OF ANAGRAM

	A	B	C
	THE NATURE OF FORMS	THE FORMS OF ART	THE ART OF FILM
1	1A	1B	1C
THE STATE OF NATURE and THE CHARACTER OF MAN	Page 7	Page 18	Page 30
2	2A	2B	2C
THE MECHANICS OF NATURE and THE METHODS OF MAN	Page 11	Page 21	Page 37
3	3A	3B	3C
THE INSTRUMENT OF DISCOVERY and THE INSTRUMENT OF INVENTION	Page 14	Page 26	Page 44

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Those who prefer the inductive method may read the elements in reverse order. Or one may slice through on the diagonal, picking up the sides afterwards.

I recommend this form to anyone who has faced the problem of compressing into a linear organization an idea which was stimulating precisely because it extended into two or three different, but not contradictory directions at once.

It has seemed especially useful to me in this essay. In the effort to apply the currently accepted esthetic theories to the first new art form in centuries, I have found it necessary to re-examine and re-evaluate principles which had become so "understood" a quality of other arts as to have constituted, for the past century, the unquestioned premises of creative action. And so I have found myself involved in fields and considerations which seem far from my original concern with film. But I believe that these are not as irrelevant as they may, off-hand, seem.

Modern specialization has discouraged the idea of the whole man. One is timid to invade or refer to territories which are not, strictly speaking, one's own. In the need to do so, nevertheless—for to arrive at principles requires comparative analysis—it is possible that I have been inaccurate in various details. And in seeking for the principles of various concepts of art form, I have examined not those talents whose genius is to transcend all principles, but those lesser lights who, in failing to transcend them, illustrate them best. This may give, at times, the impression of a wholesale underestimation of modern art; and for this impression, which does not reflect my real evaluation, I must apologize. Whatever the errors of generalization or the weaknesses of critical omission, they are committed in the interest of showing film (in such a relatively short space) not as a localized, specialized craft but as an art form, sharing with other art forms a profound relationship to man, the history of his relation to reality, and the basic problems of form.

In an anagram all the elements exist in a simultaneous relationship. Consequently, within it, nothing is first and nothing is last; nothing is future and nothing is past; nothing is old and nothing is new . . . except, perhaps, the anagram itself.

PREFACE

Any critical statement by an artist which concerns the field of his creative activity is usually taken to be a manifesto or a statement of the theories upon which the creative work is based. Art abounds in works designed to demonstrate principles and manifestos, and these are, almost without exception, inferior to those works from which the principles were derived.

In my case I have found it necessary, each time, to ignore any of my previous statements. After the first film was completed, when someone asked me to define the principle which it embodied, I answered that the function of film, like that of other art forms, was to create experience—in this case a semi-psychological reality. But the actual creation of the second film caused me to subsequently answer a similar question with an entirely different emphasis. This time, that reality must exploit the capacity of film to manipulate Time and Space. By the end of the third film, I had again shifted the emphasis—insisting this time on a filmically visual integrity, which would create a dramatic necessity of itself, rather than be dependent upon or derive from an underlying dramatic development. Now, on the basis of the fourth, I feel that all the other elements must be retained, but that special attention must be given to the creative possibilities of Time, and that the form as a whole should be ritualistic (as I define this later in the essay). I believe, of course, that some kind of development has taken place; and I feel that one symptom of the continuation of such a development would be that the actual creation of each film would not so much illustrate previous conclusions as it would necessitate new ones—and thus the theory would remain dynamic and volatile.

This is not, therefore, to be taken as a manifesto. It is an organization of ideas in an anagrammatic complex instead of in the linear logic to which we are accustomed.

An anagram is a combination of letters in such a relationship that each and every one is simultaneously an element in more than one linear series. This simultaneity is real, and independent of the fact that it is usually perceived in succession. Each element of an anagram is so related to the whole that no one of them may be changed without effecting its series and so effecting the whole. And, conversely, the whole is so related to every part that whether one reads horizontally, vertically, diagonally or even in reverse, the logic of the whole is not disrupted, but remains intact.

In this essay the element is not a single letter, but an idea concerned with the subject matter of its position in the anagram; that is, 2B, for instance, deals with the forms of art in reference to the mechanics of nature and the methods of man. In every other respect the principles governing an anagram hold. As printed, it proceeds from the general to the specific.

AN ANAGRAM OF IDEAS ON ART, FORM AND FILM

1A

At the moment, it has become fashionable, among all the self-appointed mentors of public conscience, to bemoan the inertia of the people towards the atom bomb, and to chastize this complacency with elaborate attitudes of righteous indignation, or pompous didacticism, or despair and silence. But inertia is, precisely, not a reaction—wrong or right;—it is the sheer persistence of an attitude already firmly habitual. The almost casual acceptance of the use of atomic energy is, if anything, testimony to man's complete adjustment to science; for him, it is merely the most recent in a long series of achievements, some of which, like electricity and the radio, have had far more the quality of miracle.

The anxiety of the scientists is based upon an intimate awareness of the destructive potential of the method which has been achieved. But ever since the curtains of specialization descended upon the methodology of of science, men have humbly accepted their inability to comprehend the detailed processes of such miracles, and have limited themselves to evaluating only the final results, which they have agreed to accept at their own risk. The gas piped through every kitchen simplifies the act of suicide; electricity can cause a strange death; cars can collide; airplanes can crash; tanks can explode. But man had come to terms with scientific disaster long ago, and remains consistent in his attitude.

What amazes him most, in the spectacle of current anxiety, is that the miracle-makers themselves, at this late date, seem to be attempting to reopen the first of all questions: to bite or not to bite of the forbidden fruit. Is not the public justified in its reluctance to become seriously involved in what is so obviously an academic discussion? And it is even possible that, pondering the force which can be contained in a fistful of matter, man might find poetic justice in an atomic bomb formed in the shape of an apple.

The distress of the scientists is, on the other hand, also justified. The occidental culture of the 17th century, where they began their specialized labors, had been homogeneous. All nature and reality, including man, had been previously accepted as a manifestation of the will of a central, absolute consciousness. In transposing that consciousness from the central position in the metaphysical cosmos to a location in man's own brain, the principle of conscious control and creative manipulation was, if anything, reasserted in science. It was logical to expect that this was true, as well, of all the other fields of activity.

But today the scientist emerges from the laboratory to discover himself part of a schizoid culture. The rationalism upon which he has predicated himself is an insular entity in a sociological structure which operates in terms of the most primitive motivations and non-rational procedures. And

this ambivalence is most strikingly evident in the existence of art forms which, claiming the scientific attitude toward reality as their source of inspiration, result in romantic or realistic exaltations of nature, and develop finally into the ecstasies of a sur-realism whose triumphant achievement consists in eliminating altogether the functions of consciousness and intelligence.

Presumably, man had enjoyed an age of reason in the 18th century. Yet today the concept of "reason" is as ambiguous as it had been during the 17th century, when ambiguity served to dis-simulate the actual revolution which was taking place. According to medieval concepts of absolute consciousness, the reason why a stone fell was because God willed that it do so. Reason was a function of the will of an inscrutable, immutable deity. Modern thought began with a most timid and subtle re-definition. When astronomical observations revealed the consistency of cosmic movement, it became necessary to account for this as a part of the nature with which the universe had been divinely endowed, which could henceforth function independently, (subject, of course, to divine intervention at will). In this way the divine will became a creator of laws, instead of functioning according to laws, as its consistency would have implied. The reason why a stone fell, now, was because such action was of its divine nature.

The following development was equally subtle. Reason was made a logical function, without a sacrifice of its metaphysical authority, by the simple device of attributing to the divine consciousness a rational character. When Milton wrote that it was more "reasonable" for the earth to revolve in the heavens than for the immense heavens to revolve their bulk around the earth, he was implying to deity the values of economy and efficiency—values relevant actually to the needs and conditions of man. From these "reasonable" terms to the "logical" terms of scientific cause and effect was but the last step in the achievement of a most critical intellectual revolution.

In the course of displacing deity-consciousness as the motive power of reality, by a concept of logical causation, man inevitably re-located himself in terms of the new scheme. He consciously distinguished himself from the nature which had now ceased to be divine, and proceeded to discover in himself, and within the scope of his manipulations, all the powers which he had previously attributed exclusively to deity. By the development of instruments of observation and discovery, such as the telescope, he achieved a measure of omnipresence. Through mathematical computations, he was able to extend his knowledge even beyond the reach of his instruments. From a careful analysis of causation and incidence, he developed the powers of prediction. And finally, not content to merely analyze an existent reality, he undertook to activate the principles which he had discovered, to manipulate reality, and to bring together into new relationships the elements which he was able to isolate. He was able to create forms according to his own intelligence. Thus he succeeded in usurping even the main attribute of divinity . . . fecundity. And although he was careful not to claim this, he had become himself God, to all intents and purposes, by virtue of the unique possession, among all natural phenomena, of creative consciousness.

I do not mean to imply that the exercise of consciousness originated in the 17th century. Previously, when man had considered himself a mani-

festation of divine consciousness, it was precisely through the exercise of consciousness that he could reaffirm his relationship with deity. The concerns of that relationship were moral, and up until the 17th century his activities—especially those of a philosophic and esthetic nature—consisted of moral (or ethical) ideas articulated in consciously creative and controlled forms.

Only when he relinquished his concept of divine consciousness did he confront the choice of either developing his own and accepting all the moral responsibilities previously dispensed by divinity, or of merging with inconscient nature and enjoying the luxurious irresponsibility of being one of its more complex phenomena. He resolved this problem by the simple expediency of choosing both; the forms of our modern culture are an accurate manifestation of this ambivalence. Man himself is a natural phenomenon and his activities may be either an extension and an exploitation of himself as a natural phenomenon, or he can dedicate himself to the creative manipulation and transfiguration of all nature, including himself, through the exercise of his conscious, rational powers.

Wherever he functions as a spontaneous natural phenomenon, he gives rise to forms typical of nature; wherever he functions as an analytical and creative intelligence, he achieves forms of an entirely different character. Nature, being unconscious, functions by an infinite process of inviolable cause and effect whose results are inevitabilities. But the forms of man are the results of a manipulation controlled according to motivation and intention. The forms of nature, springing from anterior causation, are often ambiguous both in their "natural" function and towards man. A mountain, created by the cooling of the earth's crust, is ambiguous in the first sense, since its incidence may or may not "serve" some purpose to the rest of the nature around it. A tree is ambiguous in its relation to man, in that its form and character are not intentionally designed, by nature, to serve any of the purposes to which man may put it. The forms of man, furthermore, are much more explicitly and economically determined by the function for which they are intended, even to the point of being limited, in their use, by that intention.

In these distinctions are implicit the moral attitudes which are respectively appropriate. The forms of nature, being inevitable, are amoral, and even at their most destructive, as in disease, cannot be considered morally responsible. The forms of man are, on the contrary, subject to moral evaluations in terms of the conscious intentions which they incorporate and they are not a priori exonerated from such judgment by their mere existence or even persistent survival.

All these basic distinctions, applied to the forms prevalent in modern culture, reveal its schizoid character. The achievements of science and industry are constituted of the forms and methods of man. The manifestations of much of our art (with which I am here specifically concerned) reveal, by and large, an effort to achieve the forms of nature.

Man's mind, his consciousness, is the greatest triumph of nature, the product of aeons of evolutionary processes, of infinite mutations, of merciless elimination. Now, in the 20th century, there are many among us who seek the long way back. In an essay on the relationship between art and the intellect, Charles Dufré has given his commentary on sur-realism a profound

humor by referring to it in a terminology drawn from the medieval period. In the sense that the sur-realist esthetic reflects a state of mind which antecedes the 17th century, he is not only correct, but, if anything, too lenient. Their "art" is dedicated to the manifestations of an organism which antecedes all consciousness. It is not even merely primitive; it is primeval. But even in this effort, man the scientist has, through the exercise of rational faculties, become more competent than the modern artist. That which the sur-realists labor and sweat to achieve, and end by only simulating, can be accomplished in full reality, by the atom bomb.

Total amnesia, although less spectacular than many other forms of mental disorder, has always seemed to me the most terrifying. A man so reduced to immediate perception only, has lost, in losing experience, all ability to evaluate, to understand, to solve and to create—in short, all that which makes him human. Moreover, in the process of evolving conscious memory man has had to forfeit those complex instinctual patterns which substitute, or rather, antecede, memory in animals. The infant kitten, out of itself—by a process of "vertical" inevitabilities—and through its own immediate experience of reality, will become a complete cat. But a human infant, out of itself, will not develop into its proper adulthood. It must learn beyond its instincts, and often in opposition to them, by imitation, observation, experimentation, reflection—in sum, by the complex "horizontal" processes of memory.

By "horizontal" I mean that the memory of man is not committed to the natural chronology of his experience—whether of an extended period, a single event, or a compulsive reaction. On the contrary, he has access to all his experience simultaneously. He can compare the beginning of a process to the end of it, without accepting it as a homogeneous totality; he can compare similar portions of events widely disparate in time and place, and so recognize both the constancy of elements and their variable functions in one context or another; and he is able to perceive that a natural, chronological whole is not immutable, but that it is a dynamic relationship of functioning parts.

So he is able to understand fire separate from the pain of his own burns.

For an animal, all experience remains immediately personal. Man's first step, accomplished through reflective recollection, is to depersonalize, to abstract from his personal experience.

Nowhere is the method more clearly epitomized than in mathematics. In order even to measure, it has first to abstract from the experience of space to a number. The concept of subjectivity, to which esthetic criteria have such frequent reference today, originated not in reference to art but, precisely, to science.

When man undertook to analyze the causes and effects of nature, on the basis of his observation, he became aware of the distorting window-glass of his subjectivity. At first he devoted himself to the development of instruments designed to "correct" his vision and to compensate for the limitations of his subjective perceptions—the sun-dial, the stable weight, the microscope, the telescope.

But even this was not enough. He became eventually aware of his subjective position. He understood that when, across a large distance, or in a

reverse wind, the sound followed long after the image of an action—that this discrepancy was not due to an inaccuracy of observation because of a failure of his senses, but that it was a condition of his subjective position, one which would exist regardless of the presence of minds or senses to perceive it.

The theory of relativity is the latest triumph in the development of theoretical computations designed to overcome and compensate for the inalienability of subjective position. And if science has found it necessary to arrive at all these instruments and calculations in order to analyze reality realistically, how can the artist "realist" presume to cover the same ground on the basis of his personal powers of perception? Is not the relative poverty of contemporary art at least partly due to the fact that, in taking realism (which is not at all the same as objectivity) as its ambition it has basically denied the existence of art and substituted science?

The realist describes his experience of reality. He denies the value of the original, artificial reality created by the rigours and disciplines of the art instrument. But he is unwilling, also, to submit to the rigours and disciplines of the scientific instrument in objectively analyzing the existent reality. And so he moves among the optical illusions of that which really is, and the shadowy dreams of that which, by art, might be. He is tortured both by the anxieties of "truth," and the demands of that most precious of man's qualities—the vanity of the creative ego.

For man it has never been enough to merely understand the dynamics of a reality which would continue, in any case, to exist independently of his analysis. If all men had agreed, with the realists and the romantics, to describe, exalt, and extend the "natural condition" there would be no such thing as science, philosophy or art.

Even in science—or rather, above all in science, the pivotal characteristic of man's method is a violation of natural integrity. He has dedicated himself to the effort to intervene upon it, to dissemble the ostensibly inviolate whole, to emancipate the element from the context in which it "naturally" occurs, and to manipulate it in the creation of a new contextual whole—a new, original state of matter and reality—which is specifically the product of his intervention.

Once a natural integrity has been so violated, by the selection of elements from the original context, all subsequent integrations are no longer natural or inevitable. The task of creating forms as dynamic as the relationships in natural phenomena, is the central problem of both the scientist and the artist.

The most simple and primitive of artificial wholes is the arithmetical whole, which is the sum of its parts. The next step is the construction of a whole which consists of the sum of its parts in a certain arrangement, either in space or in time. A machine is such a whole, and standardization is possible because the parts are interchangeable with their equivalents. That is, a bolt or wheel may be replaced by similar bolts or wheels; a like organization of bolts, wheels, pulleys, etc., will result in a like machine. In such constructions the parts remain themselves; and although they may be designed to function in a certain manner, they are not transformed in the

process of functioning. Consequently, such wholes are initially predictable from a knowledge of their parts.

But man's great dream is to achieve a whole whose character is far more mysterious and miraculous—that dynamic, living whole in which the inter-action of the parts produces more than their sum total in any sense. This relationship may be simple—as when water emerges from the interaction of hydrogen and oxygen. But let a third element be added, which transfigures both; and a fourth, which transforms the three—and the difficulties of analysis and creation become incalculable.

The entire alphabet is insufficient to describe the infinite complex of variables which the theoretical formula of life or great art would involve. For the inter-action of the parts so transforms them into function that there are no longer parts, but a simple, homogeneous whole which defies dissection analysis, and in so sublimating the complex history of its development, seems an instantaneous miracle.

All of living nature is constituted of such forms, and the nature in man may occasionally fuse all his resources into a moment of such miracle. Yet in creating man's consciousness—the capacity for conscious memory—nature created an impatience which will not wait the necessary aeons until a million conditions coincide to produce a miraculous mutation.

Memory makes possible imagination, which is the ability to so accelerate real, natural processes that they become unreal and abstract. It can telescope into a moment's thought an evolution which might take centuries and fail to occur altogether. It can arrange desirable conditions which, in nature, would have to occur as rare coincidence. Invisibly, and without the critical failures of actuality, man, in his mind, shuffles and re-shuffles the elements of his total experience—sensations, ideas, desires, fears—into a million combinations. In works of fantasy we can see the process as it occurs: the curious and often fascinating energy of a mind at work.

But should that triumphant moment—when the elements of a man's experience suddenly fuse into a homogeneous whole which transcends and so transfigures them—be left to the rarities of natural coincidence? Or should the artist, like the scientist, exercise his imaginative intelligence—the command and control of memory—to consciously try, test, modify, destroy, estimate probabilities, and try again . . . always in terms of the instrument by which the fusion will be realized.

3A

In a world so intimately overwhelmed by scientific discovery, revelation and invention—where even the most desolate island becomes a fueling station for the globe-circling airplane—it is impossible to justify a neglect or ignorance of its realities. Yet the schizophrenic solution is precisely this: to dispute nothing, to resolve no conflicts; to admit to everything and to disguise, under the homogeneity of this unassailable tolerance, the most insidious contradictions. The popularized notion of Dr. Jekeyll and Mr. Hyde fails to comprehend that very element which makes the actuality possible: that the face of the man and the beast are one and the same.

Today the ostensible aspect of all man's endeavors is a scientific justification and the midnight hour when the true flesh becomes distinguished from the skillful mask has not yet been proclaimed. The "realist" presumes as the scientific observer. The sur-realist, disguised as the "sub-conscious" itself, demands the moral clemency which man has always graciously extended to that which cannot help itself (albeit from a superior position and with an undertone of condescension).

Such borrowing of scientific terms serves to create the illusion that the actual informations of that field are being put to a creative use. The work of art is thereby graced with the authority granted the science; and the principled procedure of the former escapes investigation since the specialized procedure of the latter is beyond popular comprehension. Unfortunately, it is not always that the art gains, as that the science loses, eventually, its popular prestige. The sur-realist exploitation of the confessional for its own sake has served to minimize the therapeutic intentions of disciplined, responsible psychiatry and has inspired the notion that anyone can be an analyst, particularly in art criticism. Yet such labors most often display an abysmal ignorance of both psychiatry and art.

One of the most revealing borrowings from science is the term "primitive," from anthropology. An age like ours, obsessed with a sense of evil, guilty failure, will seek redemption in devious ways. Although anthropology would be the last to support such a notion, it has pleased certain critics to imagine that the moral character of primitive societies is innocence; and so it pleases them the more to imagine that they discover, in the professional ignorance of the "modern primitive" painter, some archeological moral fragment, well preserved, of that idyllic time. Even if they are not dismayed by such a confusion between an intellectual and a moral quality, how can they imagine it desirable for men to think as if the discoveries and inventions of the past centuries had not intervened,—to effect, even if it were possible, a total cultural amnesia at will?

I am certain that thoughtful critics do not use the term "primitive" without definition and modification. But its general usage, and as a category title for exhibits, reveals a comparative ideal based on the superficial similarity between the skilled simplicity of artists whose culture was limited in informations and crude in equipment; and the crude simplifications of artists whose culture is rich in information and refined in its equipment.

The artist of a primitive society was far from its most ignorant and isolated member. On the contrary, since his function was to represent, towards the community, the "advanced" principles of the highest moral, political and practical authorities—both human and divine—he had almost to be best informed of all.

He had to create masks, garments, patterns of dance movement—real forms which would have super-natural authority, a most difficult accomplishment. The "lucky" symbol on the war-weapon must transcend, through form, the mortality of the natural source from which it was drawn. The tapestries and wall paintings must be the comforting presence of protective powers in the home. He must compose a chant seductive enough to invoke the favor of one god, or threatening enough to exorcise the evil spirit. He stood half in the human world and half in the world of the super-natural powers; much was demanded of him by both; he could not afford the luxury of ignorance or impressions.

That that mythology is, today, an imaginative exercise for us, should not obscure the reality it had for those who lived by it. And since the greater part of the knowledge of primitive societies was a mythological knowledge, the art was an art of knowledge. But today, the distinction of the "modern primitive" is that he is unhampered by the facts which so often inhibit the imagination of his contemporaries, and so is freer to pursue the utterly imaginative concept.

It is not only in the discrepancy of intellectual attitude that the real primitive and the "modern primitive" differ, but also, and necessarily, in the forms of the art.

Two-dimensionalism, and similar conventions, on the basis of which "modern primitives" are so called, does not, in the art of primitive societies, derive from an inability to comprehend or to realize the three-dimensional perspective. Various theories have been advanced for the consistent use of abstracted and simplified form in primitive art. T. E. Hulme suggests that when man is in conflict with a nature which he finds dangerously uncontrollable, he attempts to order and control it, vicariously, by doing so in his art; whereas when he has an aimable, confident relationship to nature he is pleased to repeat such sympathetic forms. It is an interesting and perhaps valid theory.

In any case, an absolutism of art forms seems highly appropriate to societies which, subject to natural disaster, rigidly localized by geographic and material restrictions, must place the unity of the tribe above all else and thus evolve an absolutism of political, moral and economic authority and an absolutistic concept of time and space.

Thus the art works of primitive cultures comprehend and realize a whole system of ideas within their forms. For this reason they have always an authoritative and sober aspect, and even at their most delicate and

refined, they seem somehow weighted with dimensions of destiny and meaning. However mysterious the complexities and configurations may be, they never are fanciful or fantastic (except to the fanciful and fantastic). Certainly its intent is never casual, personal or decorative. The shield which was originally conceived primarily to protect, by material and magical means, is today of value on the basis of its sheer beauty, alone. Can anything testify better to the skill with which the primitive artist was able to fuse all functions (mythological, material and esthetic) into a single form? But does the "modern primitive" even aspire, much less achieve such fullness of dimension?

At its most sincere, as with Rousseau, contemporary primitive painting is a style of personal expression, a curiously naive and individual system of ideas. Sometimes, as in such creative talents, it can be sustained in the face of the informations of modern culture. But this is not often the case.

Creativity consists in a logical, imaginative extension of a known reality. The more limited the information, the more inevitable the necessity of its imaginative extension. The masks of primitive ritual extend the fierce grimace of the uncontrolled animal; the astronomical, literary voyages of the 17th and 18th centuries extended the suggestions of the telescope. The contemporary "primitive" may achieve some extraordinary effects by imaginatively extending some immediate, simple knowledge. But imagine his embarrassment at suddenly confronting fields of knowledge whose real discoveries make redundant his extensions, and are often even more astounding and miraculous. His knowledge is invalidated and ceases to serve as a springboard for creative action. Adjusted to the stable, absolute concepts of his own small world he cannot, in a moment, readjust his imagination to extend the new, miraculous realities of the airplane, the telephone, the radio. Nor can he make the philosophical and psychological adjustment necessary to relocate himself in the strange relativisms of time and space which these instruments introduce into his life.

As the art dealers know very well, the "modern primitive" must be a zealously guarded recluse. But if this is so, he differs from the true primitive not only in being less informed of his own culture (in meaning if not in actual fact) and in creating forms irrelevant to its informations, but in creating them also in isolation, rather than in functional relation to that culture. Failing of a mythological authority for his ideas, his point of view on reality, however charming, must stand comparison with our knowledge of reality. All this conspires to make of the "modern primitive" a singular curiosity which must, at best, be evaluated not by the pseudo-scientific approach implied in the word "primitive," but as a personal style which stands or falls, as all art does, by the creative genius of the artist.

I hope that in using the exaggerations of the special category of the "modern primitive" I have not weakened my essential point. In its ambiguous implications, and in the possibility of contrasting it to its namesake, it afforded a convenient opportunity to point out a common failure of modern thought to understand that art must at least comprehend the large facts of its total culture, and, at best, extend them imaginatively.

As I suggest elsewhere, the distinctions between the romantic, the realist and the sur-realist are not as great as each of them would like to believe. To invade (as they all do) the province of science—the analysis of the nature of reality—with the minimal instruments of personal perception is surely not the same as to benefit by the discoveries arrived at by refined, scientific methods. To be a deliberately primitive scientist is today, of all ambitions, the most senseless. And to substitute such redundant, exploratory activity for that of creating an art reality is to fail entirely to add to the variety and richness of one's culture.

Art is the dynamic result of the relationship of three elements: the reality to which a man has access—directly and through the researches of all other men; the crucible of his own imagination and intellect; and the art instrument by which he realizes, through skillful exercise and control, his imaginative manipulations. To limit, deliberately or through neglect, any of these functions, is to limit the potential of the work of art itself.

The reality from which man draws his knowledge and the elements of his manipulation has been amplified not only by the development of analytical instruments; it has, increasingly, become itself a reality created by the manipulation of instruments. The reality which we must today extend—the large fact which we must comprehend, just as the primitive artist comprehended and extended his own reality—is the relativism which the airplane, the radio and the new physics has made a reality of our lives.

We cannot shirk this responsibility by using, as a point of departure, the knowledge and state of mind of some precedent period of history. My repeated insistence upon the distinctive function of form in art—my insistence that the distinction of art is that it is neither simply an expression, of pain, for example, nor an impression of pain but is itself a form which creates pain (or whatever its emotional intent)—might seem to point to a classicism. If so, I must remind the reader that I have elsewhere characterized the "ritualistic" form (in which I have included classicism) as an exercise, above all, of consciousness. The reality which such consciousness would today comprehend is not that of any other period. In this, and in the invention of new art instruments, lies the potential originality of the art of our time.

Accustomed as we are to the idea of a work of art as an "expression" of the artist, it is perhaps difficult to imagine what other possible function it could perform. But once the question is posed, the deep recesses of our cultural memory release a procession of indistinct figures wearing the masks of Africa, or the Orient, the hoods of the chorus, or the innocence of the child-virgin . . . the faces always concealed, or veiled by stylization—moving in formal patterns of ritual and destiny. And we recognize that an artist might, conceivably, create beyond and outside all the personal compulsions of individual distress.

The evidence accumulates, and presses, in the occident, towards the 17th century. And it becomes important to discover how and why man renounced the mask and started to move towards the feverish narcissism which today crowds the book-stores, the galleries, and the stage.

The change was subtle. The relationship of thought and art on the one hand and discovery and invention on the other, is not a settled marriage, grown steady with agreement and adjustment. It is more like a passionate flirtation, full of defiance, reluctance, anticipation and neglect. It is true that in his treatment of personality Shakespeare anticipates that amalgam of romanticism and realism which reached its peak in the 19th century and has not yet spent its force. But the formal whole in which the characters of his dramas expounded their personal emotions, was as stringent a destiny as that of classicism. Perhaps the secret of his art lies, precisely, in the impact of the intensely romantic personality upon a universe still absolute in structure.

In the 17th century man, along with nature, ceased to be a manifestation of the absolute divine will, and accepted, in the first pride of his newfound, individual consciousness, the moral responsibilities which he had, until then left to the dispensation of the deity. All this was reflected in the classicism of the early 18th century, and it seems to me evident that if a period of classicism could occur in the full flush of this exhilarating belief that man was, to all intents and purpose, the dominant figure of the universe, then it must be a form predicated not upon absolutism, but upon the idea of consciousness. Whether this consciousness is a manifestation of deity in man, or whether it is of man's own nature becomes important only at the moment that its powers are put to a test and found wanting. It was exactly such a failure which the violences, confusions, and reversals which followed seemed to indicate.

For man, in his political and social activities, did not pause to develop instruments and methods equivalent to those which the scientist, in his province, labored to perfect. Nor did he stop to realize that invention

anywhere could successfully follow only upon cautious preparations and analyses. His repeated failure to invent a social organization which would be immediately successful and appropriate to his new concept of the universe was a critical blow to his newly acquired self esteem and seemed to be a failure of consciousness itself. Nor was he experienced enough a scientist to be consoled by the long history of failure which, in scientific experiment, precedes any achievement. Even if he were aware of this, his central position in the universe endowed his problems, pains and disappointments with an importance to which the impersonal, experimental failures of science could not presume to compare. He could not now endure those troubles which, as a more modest element of the universe, he had previously accepted in the firm conviction that even misfortune contained some benediction according to the inscrutable will of God.

His adjustment to this complex of conditions was most dextrous. As a realist, conversant with scientific causation, he relinquished the principle of control and "acknowledged" the forces of reality as beyond the scope of his individual, moral responsibility. But as a romantic, he retained his exalted position in center of the universe and so was entitled to give full expression to his individual concerns and agonies. In this way he could be both nature and deity, except that, as part of nature, he could not be held responsible as a divine will. Once this principle was established, it was simple to accomplish, eventually, the shift of emphasis from self-expression to self-exaltation as a phenomenon of nature whose actions and reactions, being inevitable, were, like nature, outside the law of moral responsibility; and, finally, encouraged by the dignified benediction of psycho-analysis, as a science, he could indulge in the ecstasies of sur-realist confessional. Since to confess to some banality is to lose the advantage of confessional, even those artists who are reasonably happy find it necessary to pretend to horrors in the effort to present a "truth which is stranger than fiction."

The romantic and the sur-realist differ only in the degree of their naturalism. But between naturalism and the formal character of primitive, oriental and Greek art there is a vast ideological distance. For want of a better term which can refer to the quality which the art forms of various civilizations have in common, I suggest the word ritualistic. I am profoundly aware of the dangers in the use of this term, and of the misunderstandings which may arise, but I fail, at the moment, to find a better word. Its primary weakness is that, in strictly anthropological usage, it refers to an activity of a primitive society which has certain specific conditions: a ritual is anonymously evolved; it functions as an obligatory tradition; and finally, it has a specific magical purpose. None of these three conditions apply, for example, to Greek tragedy. On the other hand, they are, in a sense, exterior to the ritual form itself, since they refer to its origin, its preservation and its function. Moreover, it is hardly beside the point that all art forms were originally a part of such rituals and that the form itself, within itself, has remained strikingly intact in general outline, in spite of the changes in these exterior conditions. It is to these constant elements, which seem to me of major importance since they exist simultaneously in unrelated cultures, to which I have reference.

Even when it is not the anonymous primitive ritual, the ritualistic form is not the expression of the individual nature of the artist; it is the result of the application of his individual talent to the moral problems which have been the concern of man's relationship with deity, and the evidence of that privileged communication. It is never an effort to reveal a reality which, in the face of divine omniscience and power, man could not presume to know.

The ritualistic form reflects also the conviction that such ideas are best advanced when they are abstracted from the immediate conditions of reality and incorporated into a contrived, created whole, stylized in terms of the utmost effectiveness. It creates fear, for example, by creating an imaginative, often mythological experience which, by containing its own logic within itself, has no reference to any specific time or place, and is forever valid for all time and place. How different is the customary modern method, which induces fear by employing some real contemporary figure which, in reality, inspires it; or reconstructs some situation which might be typical of the contemporary experience of some cultural majority. Such a method may be temporarily effective, but the conditions of life, and so the "real" experience of men, changes with a rapidity which can date such "realism" in a few years. That which was frightening today is no longer frightening tomorrow.

Above all, the ritualistic form treats the human being not as the source of the dramatic action, but as a somewhat depersonalized element in a dramatic whole. The intent of such depersonalization is not the destruction of the individual; on the contrary, it enlarges him beyond the personal dimension and frees him from the specializations and confines of personality. He becomes part of a dynamic whole which, like all such creative relationships, in turn, endow its parts with a measure of its larger meaning.

If it can be said that, in romanticism, the tragedy results from the destructive, tragic nature of its central figure, then it must be said, by contrast, that in ritualistic form the tragedy confers often upon an unsuspecting person, the heroic stature of the tragic figure.

In its method—a conscious manipulation designed to create effect, in contrast to the spontaneous compulsions of expression—and in its results—the new, man-made reality, in contrast to the revelation or recapitulation of one which exists—the ritualistic form is much more the art equivalent of modern science than the naturalism which claims to be so based.

Today it would decline to concern itself with a revelation of reality not because man is incapable, but because science is more capable than art in that capacity. And it would be predicated upon the exercise of consciousness, not as the instrument by which divine will is apprehended, but as the human instrument which makes possible a comprehension and a manipulation of the universe in which man must somehow locate himself.

The impulse behind my insistent concern with the triumphant achievements of science is most elemental: I believe simply that an analysis of any of man's achievements may reveal basic principles of methodology which, properly adjusted to the immediate conditions of other problems, may lead to similar triumphs. I do not claim this to be an original attitude, for naturalism is presumably just such a transcription from the methods of science to those of art. My argument is that if such a procedure is to have any value, then it must be based on a thorough observation of the whole method, and not a tangential development of some portion of it. If the complex specialization of science in the 18th and 19th centuries obscured the basic design of its method, then it might even have been better to follow, as example, some other field of achievement altogether.

Just as the varying use of the word reason reflected the development of the concept of reason in the 17th century, so the current use of the word consciousness reveals the underlying concept of its function. In art, today a state of consciousness is understood as synonymous with a capacity for observation. This capacity may range, in degree, from the most simple sensory perception to the most complex analysis or the acute, associational insight. These are then recorded in a style of notation which may range from the defiantly awkward (proof of the fact that the original impression of a truth has not been tampered with) to the decoratively graceful (the flirtatious pirouette of the artist around his subject).

In such a concept of art, the role of the artist has degenerated into a basic passivity. He functions as an often inaccurate barometer, scaled in emotional degrees, whose nervous fluctuations are recorded by a frequently defective mechanism, in a code whose key is often inconstant and sometimes even unknown. His achievement, if any, consists in a titillating reproduction of a reality which can be enjoyed in air-conditioned comfort by an audience too comatose to take the exercise of a direct experience of life.

The essential irony of such a concept is that, in undertaking to reveal the nature of reality, the artist enters the province of science, lacking the very weapons, skills and stratagems with which the scientist has carefully equipped himself; and worst of all, he has no concept for the function of his discoveries, except to stuff, mount and exhibit the more impressive and presentable portions (or, with the sur-realists, the more gruesome and shocking) on the walls of his house, as proof of his capacity for extravagant emotional adventure.

In science, the findings, no matter how painfully accumulated, are but the raw materials of an ultimate creative action. The first step of creative action is the violation of the "natural" integrity of an original context.

But much of the art of our time, and of the period immediately preceding it, has, as its avowed purpose, the representation or projection of some natural integrity in terms of its own exaltedly "inalienable" logic of inevitabilities. This is equally true of the various "schools" who imagine themselves in fundamental opposition. Nor should the basic method be obscured by those singular talents who, in the process of creating, transcend all theoretical principles.

The "realists," critical of the esoteric aspects of sur-realism, propose an art form constituted of "common, recognizable emotions" occurring in a "common, realistic" frame of reference, and presented in the "common language of every day speech." They regard this as a guarantee of communicability and "mass appeal." Yet the precedents of our cultural history do not support such a theory. On the contrary, the most popular theaters—the Elizabethan and the Greek—dealt with emotions universal only by generalization, but extraordinary in their immediate quality (Hamlet and Oedipus), resulting from extraordinary circumstances, and articulated in a most uncommon, highly stylized speech.

It is at least to the credit of the sur-realists that once they accepted the forms of nature as model, they were relentless and uncompromising in the logical pursuit of this principle. In atomizing the human being, they even anticipated, in a sense, a scientific destiny. Many of their paintings, if they were not presented as works of the imagination, might easily pass for emotionally heightened reportorial sketches of Hiroshima (of the kind which Life Magazine reproduces): the nightmare of oozing blood, the horror of degenerative death from invisible, inner radiations, the razed landscapes reduced to its primeval elements, the solitary, crazed survivors. But even if one were not to find such a point of exterior reference, the sur-realists are self-avowedly dedicated to externalizing an inner reality whose original integrity has been devotedly preserved.

Both the "realists" and the "sur-realists" have a very righteous contempt for the group loosely characterized as the "romantics." The realists criticize them for "escaping" from reality, whereas the sur-realists criticize them for the sentimentality with which they idealize reality. But one consistent motivation of the creative act is the conviction of one's originality; the entire personal justification of whatever effort is required is that the result does not duplicate (at least in its particular aspects) the achievements of another artist. Taken in terms of the representation or the expression of natural reality, the originality of achievement becomes, then, an originality of discovery, a pursuit of the exotic, novel condition, exterior or interior, the search for the "truth which is stranger than fiction."

Thus the argument between the "realists," the "sur-realists" and the "romantic escapists" is not one of form, nor even of the method of art, but merely a disagreement as to which landscape is of most consequence: the familiar, drug-store around the corner, the inner chamber of horrors, or the island utopias of either an inner or outer geography.

Before psychiatry, as a science, began its investigation of emotional realities, or photography its immaculate observation of material reality, the artist was often concerned with either or both of these. But he did not always indulge in the simple expediency of representation as he does today.

That which was, in reality, a result of natural, inevitable processes had to emerge, in the work of art, as the effect of a controlled, artificial manipulation. The configurations and colors of a landscape are a part of an infinite complex of climatic, chemical, botanical, and other elements. In a painting of such a landscape, the harmony, brilliancy, etc., had to be achieved through the manipulation of paint, line, color, shape, size. The least requirement of such a transcription was professional skill and an understanding of one's chosen medium.

The art world today is overwhelmed by the products of arrogant amateurs and dilettantes who refuse to respect their "profession" by even so much as a dedication to its skills and techniques. The emphasis is upon spontaneity in the act of creation, although this is the last possible means by which inevitability can be created in the work itself. It is revealing that the exercise of skill—professionalism in its highest sense—is at an apparent all-time low in art. The prevalent feeling is that you, too, can be an artist in three easy lessons, providing you are "sensitive" or "observant," and so can discover, in the world outside or in the microcosmos of your own tortures, some bit of reality which has not already been exploited. The central problem is to represent it with a fair degree of fidelity.

But why would one exalt the integrity of nature or any part of it, in its own terms, or seek to fashion an art form out of its "intrinsic values" and inalienable logics, when our age has arrived at the ultimate recognition of relative relationships in the discovery that all matter is energy? If the achievements of science are the result of a violation of natural integrity, in order to emancipate its elements and re-relate them, how can an artist be content to do no more than to perceive, analyze and, at most, recreate these ostensibly inviolable wholes of nature?

To renounce the natural frame of reference—the natural logic and integrity of an existent reality—is not, as is popularly assumed, an escape from the labor of truth. On the contrary, it places upon the artist the entire responsibility for creating a logic as dynamic, integrated and compelling as those in which nature abounds. To create a form of life is, in the final analysis, much more demanding than to render one which is ready-made.

The intent to create a new set of relationships effects, first of all, the selection of elements. In a naturalistic form, an element is selected in terms of a presumed "intrinsic" value; actually, this value is not intrinsic but is conferred upon it by the context in which it "naturally" occurs. In creating a new form, the elements must be selected according to their ability to function in the new, "un-natural" context. A gesture which may have been very effective in the course of some natural, spontaneous conversation, may fail to have impact in a dance or film; whereas one which may have passed unnoticed may be intensely moving if it lends itself to a climactic position in art context.

On the face of it, such considerations may seem obvious. Yet much of naturalistic art relies precisely on the "intrinsic" value of the element. Here it is not the context of the work which endows the element with value, but the associational process by which the audience refers that element to its own experience of reality. To rely upon such reference is to limit communicability to an audience which shares, with the artist, a common ground of experience.

Such "timely" art stands in great contrast to, for instance, the Greek drama, which has survived precisely because the elements which it employed had only a coincidental reference to the reality of the period in which it was created. Actually, these elements were emancipated from all immediately recognizable contexts, and so were never dependent upon being confirmed by personalized references of the audience. Their value derives from the integrated whole of which they are a part, and this whole is not a familiar, but a new experience. Being new, it illuminates emotions and ideas which may have escaped our attention in the distracting profusions of reality, and so becomes educational (in the finest sense of the word). The lavish fecundity of nature, without which it could not survive all material disasters, gives way, in art, to a concept of economy. Out of the wealth of remembered experience, the elements are selected with discrimination, according to their compatibility with the other elements of the intended whole.

In speaking of the relationships which are created in scientific forms, I listed those wholes which are the sum total of parts, and those which are the sum total of parts in a certain arrangement (as in a machine), and finally that "emergent whole" (I borrow the term from Gestalt psychology), in which the parts are so dynamically related as to produce something new which is unpredictable from a knowledge of the parts. It is this process which makes possible the idea of economy in art, for the whole which here emerges transcends, in meaning, the sum total of the parts. The effort of the artist is towards the creation of a logic in which two and two may make five, or, preferably, fifteen; when this is achieved, two can no longer be understood as simply two. This five, or this fifteen—the resultant idea or emotion—is therefore a function of the total relationships, the form of the work (which is independent of the form of reality by which it may have been inspired). It is this which Flaubert had reference to in stating that "L'idée n'existe qu'en vertu de sa forme."

One of the most unfortunate aspects of the dominance of the naturalist tradition in art today is the existence of an audience unaccustomed to the idea of the objective form of art. Instead, accustomed to a work of art as a reference to nature, they anticipate a re-creation of their own experience. They take issue with any experience which does not conform with their own, and characterize it as a personalized distortion. On the other hand, they may, coincidentally, concur with that observation, in which case it is not a distortion, but an "acute insight into reality." The development and decline of the vogue for sur-realism is almost a graph of the fluctuation of such coincidences.

Yet, as I have pointed out elsewhere, the most enduring works of art create a mythical reality, which cannot refer to one's own personal observations.

Even antiquity does not always protect such works from dismemberment by the subjective audience. But in contemporary art, and especially when the elements are drawn from reality, the audience is certain to approach the work as if it were altogether a natural phenomenon. They isolate from it those elements which they find most personally evocative, and interpret them according to their personal context of experience. Such

an individualism implies a complete refusal to recognize the intention of the artist in creating a specific context, and the meaning which is conferred upon the elements by this context. It results in the incredible platitude, intended always as a compliment, that in the great works of art every one can read his own personal meaning. Or, as I treat in detail elsewhere, the dismemberment may be achieved by the instrument of an alien system, such as Freudianism.

A work of art is an emotional and intellectual complex whose logic is its whole form. Just as the separate actions of a man in love will be misunderstood, or even thought "insane," from the logic of non-love, so the parts of a work of art lose their true meaning when removed from their context and evaluated by some alien logical system. And just as an analysis of the reasons for love may follow upon the experience, but do not explain or induce it, so a dis-sectional analysis of a work of art fails, in the act of dismemberment, to comprehend the very inter-active dynamics which give it life. Such an analysis cannot substitute, and may even inhibit, the experience itself, which only an unprejudiced receptivity, free of personal requirements and preconceptions, can invite.

In the effort to protect their art from dismemberment, many painters have become abstractionists. By eliminating recognizable form, they hoped to eliminate exterior reference. It is my impression that music, being by nature abstract, is less subject to such dismemberment, although I have heard the most gruesome tales of what has been done even to Mozart. But language is, by its own nature, recognizable. For this reason we have developed, in connection with poetry, a phenomenal quantity of interpretative literature. Many writers compose more creatively in their commentaries upon other writers than they do in their art proper. Poetry has suffered most at the hands of the subjective reader, for each word can be pried from its context and used as a springboard for creative action in terms of some personal frame of reference and in all art, the more integrated the whole, the more critically it is effected by even the most minute change.

When Marcel Duchamp drew a mustache on the Mona Lisa, he accepted the painting as a ready-made reality out of which, by the addition of a few well-placed lines, he created a Duchamp, which he thereafter exhibited under his own name. And the subjective spectator who adds his personal mustaches to works of art should have the courage and the integrity to thereafter assume responsibility for his creative action under his own name.

As in science, the process of creative art is two-fold: the experience of reality by the artist on one side, and his manipulation of that experience into an art reality on the other. In his person he is an instrument of discovery; in his art he exercises the art-instrument of invention.

Contemporary art is especially characterized by an emphasis upon the artist as himself instrument of discovery and the role of the art instrument has, for the most part, degenerated into a mere means of conveying those discoveries. In other words, the emphasis is upon reality as it exists, obvious or obscured, simple or complex.

The incidence of naturalism in art is in almost direct proportion to the extent to which the elements of reality (the experience of the artist) can serve also as the elements of the work of art; and to the extent to which the natural, contextual logic in which they occur can be simulated or reconstructed in the art work. Thus, naturalism has been most of all manifest in the plastic forms, where the art elements—lines, colors, masses, perspectives, etc.—can be immediately derived from reality.

Language, on the other hand, consists of elements which are themselves un-natural and invented. Here it is possible to be naturalistic in reference to a language reality: that is, a conversation, being already a transcription of ideas and emotions into verbal patterns, can be itself reproduced as an intact reality in literature. One has only to compare the dialogues of classic literature to the conversations of naturalistic novels and dramas, or, further, to the word-doodling of some sur-realist "poetry," to see the difference in the approach to language.

Even in naturalism, a departure from ready-made conversational reality, or from word-ideas, may inspire a creative exercise on the part of the writer. A verbal description, however accurate, is not the reality itself of a chair, for instance, since the chair exists in spatial terms; just as a painting becomes "literary" when it is based upon an effort to illustrate, in spatial terms, ideas which are essentially verbal.

Flaubert is thought of as a prime example of an artist dedicated to the accurate description of reality. Yet his linguistic diligence indicates that he thought, actually, of creating, in verbal terms, the equivalent of the experience which he had of spatial reality. He succeeded in creating a verbal reality whose validity is not at all dependent upon the degree of accuracy which it achieves in reference to the reality by which it was inspired. In Flaubert it is completely irrelevant whether there ever existed, in reality, the chair which exists in the novel. But in many of those writers which claim to his tradition it is, on the contrary, important for the reader to decide: are these things really true in the world?

The chair which Flaubert creates by the exercise of his art instrument—language—is not a visual image, it is a verbal image. Moreover, it is, precisely, an independent verbal image and not a symbol. (I elaborate on this distinction, in another respect, elsewhere.) For if it were a symbol, its meaning would reside outside the work, in whatever reality—object or event—it represented as substitute or had reference to. I stress this independence of an image created by the work of art itself because there is a tendency, today, to regard all images as symbols: to insist that nothing is what it is but that it must "stand for" something else.

In view of the currently loose, casual usage of the word "symbol," it would seem important to re-asertain its more explicit meaning. In speaking of the direct, immediate meaning of an "image," I do not intend to exclude the process of generalization. On the contrary, the individual moment or image is valuable only insofar as its ripples spread out and encompass the richness of many moments; and certainly this is true of the work of art as a whole. But to generalize from a specific image is not the same as to understand it as a symbol for that general concept. When an image induces a generalization and gives rise to an emotion or idea, it bears towards that emotion or idea the same relationship which an exemplary demonstration bears to some chemical principle; and that is entirely different from the relationship between that principle and the written chemical formula by which it is symbolized. In the first case the principle functions actively; in the second case its action is symbolically described, in lieu of the action itself. An understanding of this distinction seems to me to be of primary importance.

All works employing figures of mythology are especially proposed as evidence of the "symbolic" method. Yet to say this is to imply that a Greek tragedy would fail to convey its values to one ignorant of the complex genealogy and intricate activities of the pantheon.

It may be argued that the references which would, today, be ascertained only by scholarly research were, at the time of the creation of the work, a matter of common knowledge. But I have pointed out elsewhere, and it is relevant here, that an integrated whole emerges not from some intrinsic value of its elements, but from their function in dynamic relationship to all the others. Consequently, even when an object may have also some exterior symbolic reference, it functions accordingly in the whole, and so is re-defined by its own immediate context. Zeus is a great power in the mythological pantheon. But Zeus also functions as a great power whenever he is introduced as a dramatic element in a theatrical creation—to the extent that the author believed in the mythology. Consequently we can know his power from the work of art where it is re-created by the art instrument, without knowing anything else. In this way it is possible for an image to "mean" much directly, and not by virtue of an indirect, symbolic representation.

It may be possible that some esoteric research into the domestic complications of the pantheon would reveal some second level of meaning, as symbolic reference. But it is a question as to whether appreciation is ever intensified by such effort. And I doubt that such works of art, dedicated to the creation of an experience which should illuminate certain ethical or

moral principles, would entrust their primary ideas to a second or third level of diagnosis.

For similar reasons, I cannot see what is to be gained by the current tendency to regard all the images of a work in terms of Freudian symbolic reference. A competent artist, intent on conveying some sexual reference, will find a thousand ways to evade censorship and make his meaning irrevocably clear. Even the incompetents of Hollywood daily achieve this; should we deny at least a similar skill in our more serious artists?

My contention is that whenever an image is endowed with a certain meaning-function by the context of the work of art—the product of an art instrument itself—then that is the value proper of the image in reference to the specific work. When an author is delicate in reference to love or sex, it very well may be that he intends it as a delicate experience (as contrast and deliberate counter-point to other experiences in the work); or, as artist, he may prefer to leave such lyric, exalted experience to the imagination of the audience, rather than confine and limit it by the crudities of his technique. And what right have we then to shout out that which he intended to have the qualities of a whisper; or destroy his counter-points; or to define that which he, in considered humility, found, himself, undefinable? To do so would be to destroy the integrity which he has carefully created—to destroy the work of art itself.

One could, perhaps, psycho-analyze the artist as a personality . . . why does he think love to be a delicate and magical experience? But to the extent that the artist manipulates and creates consciously according to his instrument, the instrument acts as a censor upon the free expression which psycho-analysis requires, for he selects, from his associational stream of images, those which are appropriate to and compatible with the other elements.

Psycho-analysis, while valid as a therapy for mal-adjusted personality, defeats its own purpose as a method of art criticism, for it implies that the artist does not create out of the nature of his instrument, but that it is used merely to convey some reality independent of all art. It implies that there is no such thing as art at all, but merely more or less accurate self-expression. In an essay on *La Fontaine's "Adonis,"* Paul Valéry makes some very penetrating observations on the difference between the personal dream and the impersonal work of art, which are very relevant to this whole discussion.

It is customary today to refer to the sensitivity or perception of an artist as a primary value; and to the extent that the artist seeks to reveal the nature of reality, it is entirely appropriate to consider him, by inference, an instrument of discovery. But if such is his function, then he cannot protest a comparison with the other instruments of discovery, such as the telescope or the microscope, and, in the provinces of his frequent concerns, the instruments and methods of the sociologist and the psychologist. Nor can he protest an evaluation of the "truths" at which he arrives, not only in comparison to our own personal impressions as audience, but also according to the extent that these "truths" conform to the revelations of specialists who devote themselves to the same material. We tend to approach a work of art with a certain sentimental reverence, but if we are able to

avoid this prejudice in comparing, for example, one of the "psychological" novels to the meticulous observations of a well-documented case history, I, for one, find the latter to be by far a more stimulating, revealing experience of reality.

Such psychological novels (I except, obviously, such masters as Dostoevsky, James, etc.) often fail not only in the accuracy of their observation, but, in their determined efforts to analyze the personality, frequently contradict the fundamental principle of effectiveness in art: they fail to so present their observations as to make a certain conclusion inevitable to the reader, and they substitute, instead, a statement of their own conclusion. All is understood for us, and we are deprived of the stimulating privilege of ourselves understanding.

The decorative "artistic" periphery of such "analytical" works of art fails to disguise their essentially uncreative nature and serves, most frequently, to simply obscure that very truth which the artist undertakes to reveal. There are also other disadvantages to art as scientific observation. Gertrude Stein has somewhere stated that "the realism of today seems new because the realism of the past is no longer real." And if the validity of a work depends upon either the accuracy of its revelations or the novelty of its discoveries it is subject to the failure here implied, of becoming, one day, dully past. If the importance of "Paradise Lost" had been predicated upon the "truth" of its medieval cosmography, the astronomical discoveries of the 17th century would have invalidated the entire work.

Unlike the inventions of science, which are valuable only until another invention serves the purpose better, the inventions of art, being experiences of emotional and intellectual nature, are, as such, valid for all time. And unlike discoveries, which are confined by the fixed limits of human perception, or advanced in a different manner by scientific instruments and knowledge, the collaboration between imagination and art instrument can still, after all these centuries, result in marvelous new art inventions.

My extended analysis and criticism of the naturalistic method in art is inspired by my intimate awareness of how much the very nature of photography, more than any other art form, may seduce the artist (and spectator) into such an esthetic.

The most immediate distinction of film is the capacity of the camera to represent a given reality in its own terms, to the extent that it is accepted as a substitute proper for that reality. A photograph will serve as proof of the "truth" of some phenomenon where either a painting or a verbal testimony would fail to carry weight. In other art forms, the artist is the intermediary between reality and the instrument by which he creates his work of art. But in photography, the reality passes directly through the lens of the camera to be immediately recorded on film, and this relationship may, at times, dispense with all but the most manual services of a human being, and even, under certain conditions, produce film almost "untouched by human hands." The position of the camera in reference to reality can be either a source of strength, as when the "realism" of photography is used to create an imaginative reality; or it can seduce the photographer into relying upon the mechanism itself to the extent that his conscious manipulations are reduced to a minimum.

The impartiality and clarity of the lens—its precise fidelity to the aspect and texture of physical matter—is the first contribution of the camera. Sometimes, because of the physical and functional similarity between the eye and the lens, there is a most curious tendency to confuse their respective contributions. By some strange process of ambiguous association (which most photographers are only too willing to leave uncorrected) the perceptiveness and precision of a photograph is somehow understood to be an expression of the perceptiveness of the eyes of the photographer. This transcription of attributes is more common than one might imagine. When the primary validity of a photograph consists in its clarity or its candidness (and these are by far the most common criteria) it should be signed by those who ground the lens, who constructed the fast, easily manipulated camera, who sweated over the chemistry of emulsions which would be both sensitive and fine-grained, who engineered the optical principles of both camera and enlarger—in short, by all those who made photography possible, and least of all by the one who pushed the button. As Kodak has so long advertized: "You push the button, IT does the rest!"

The ease of photographic realism does not, however, invalidate the documentarist's criticism of the "arty" efforts (characteristic of a certain period of film development) to deliberately muffle the lens in imitation of the myopic, undetailed, and even impressionistic effects of painting where,

precisely, the limitations of human vision played a creative role in simplifying and idealizing reality.

On another level, the realists are critical, and again justifiably so, of the commercial exploitation of film as a means of reproducing theater and illustrating novels . . . almost as a printing press reproduces an original manuscript in great quantity. Out of respect for the unique power of film to be itself a reality, they are impatient with the painted backdrops, the "furnished stages," and all the other devices which were developed as part of the artifice of theater and drama. If it is possible, they say, to move the camera about, to capture the fleeting, "natural" expression of a face, the inimitable vistas of nature, or the unstageable phenomenon of social realities, then such is the concern of film to be exploited, as distinct from other forms.

Such a concept of film is true to its very origins. The immediate precursor of movies was Mary's photographic series of the successive stages of a horse running. Between this first record of a natural phenomenon, and the more recent scientific films of insect life, plant life, chemical processes, etc., lies a period of increasing technical invention and competency, without any basic change in concept.

In the meantime, however, a concern with social reality had branched off as a specific field of film activity. The first newsreels of important historical events, such as the coronation, differ from the newsreels of today only in terms again of a refined technique, but from them came the documentary film, a curious amalgamation of scientific and social concerns. It is not a coincidence that Robert Flaherty, who is considered the father of the documentary film, was first an explorer, and that his motivation in carrying a camera with him was part anthropological, part social, and part romantic. He had discovered a world which was beyond the horizon of most men. He was moved both by its pictorial and its human values; and his achievement consists of recording it with sympathetic, and relative accuracy. The documentary of discovery—whether it records a natural, a social, or a scientific phenomenon—can be of inestimable value. It can bring within the reach of even the most sedentary individual a wealth of experience which would otherwise come only to the curious, the painstaking, and the heroic.

But whenever the value of a film depends, for the most part, upon the character of its subject, it is obvious that the more startling realities will have a respectively greater interest for the audience. War, as a social and political phenomenon, results in realities which surpass the most violent anticipations of human imagination. Because it also played an immediate role in our lives, we were obsessed with a need to comprehend them. And so, since the reality itself was more than enough to hold the interest of the audience (and so required least the imaginative contributions of the film maker) the war documentaries contain passages which carry naturalism to its farthest point.

I should like to refer to two examples which are strikingly memorable but essentially representative. In a newsreel which circulated during war-time, there was a sequence in which a Japanese soldier was forced from his hideout by flame throwers and ran off, burning like a torch. In the

documentary "Fighting Lady" there is an exciting sequence in which the plane which carries the camera swoops down and strafes some enemy planes on the ground. This latter footage was achieved by connecting the shutter of the camera with the machine gun so that when the gun was fired the camera would automatically begin registering.

An analysis of these examples can serve to illuminate the essential confusion, implicit in the very beginnings of the idea of the natural form in art, between the provinces and purposes of art and those of science, as well as the distinctions between those art forms which depend upon or extend reality, and those which themselves create a reality. The footage of the burning soldier points up the reliance upon the accidents of reality (so prevalent in photography) as contrasted to the inevitabilities, consciously created, of art. The essential amorality and ambiguity of a "natural" form is also apparent here; for were we not prepared by previous knowledge,—by an outside frame of reference—we would undoubtedly have deep compassion for the burning soldier and a violent hatred for the flame thrower.

In the case of the camera which is synchronized with the machine gun, the dissociation between man and instrument, and the independent relationship between reality and camera, is carried to an unanticipated degree. If this film can be said to reflect any intention, it must be that of death, for such was the function of the gun. In any case, the reality of the conflict is itself entirely independent of the action of the camera, rather than a creation of it, as is true of the experience of an art form.

Nor is it irrelevant to point out here that the war documentaries were achieved with an anonymity which even science, the most objective of professions, would find impossible. These films are the product of hundreds, even thousands, of unidentified cameramen. This is not another deliberate effort of the "top brass" to minimize the soldier-cameraman. It is a reflection upon a method which, unrestricted by budgetary considerations of film or personnel, could be carried to its logical conclusion. These cameramen were first instructed carefully in the mechanics of photography—(not in the form of film)—and were sent out to catch whatever they could of the war, to get it on photographic record. The film was then gathered together, assorted according to chronology or specific subject, and put at the disposal of the film editors. If the material of one cameraman could be distinguished from another, it was in terms of sheer technical competence; or, perhaps, occasionally a consistent abundance of dramatic material which might testify to an unusual alertness and a heroic willingness to risk one's life in order to "capture" on film some extraordinary moment.

This whole process is certainly more analogous to the principle of fecundity in nature than to that of the economical selectivity of art. Of all this incalculably immense footage, no more than a tiny percentage will ever be put to function in a documentary or any other filmic form.

Let me make it clear that I do not intend to minimize either the immediate interest or the historical importance of such a use of the motion-picture medium. To do so would require, by logical analogy, that I dismiss all written history, especially since it is a much less accurate form of record than the film, and value only the creative, poetic use of language.

But precisely because film, like language, serves a wide variety of needs, the triumphs which it achieves in one capacity must not be permitted to obscure its failures in another.

The war years were marked by a great interest in the documentary, just as they were characterized by the overwhelming lionization of foreign correspondents, and for the same reason. But such reportage did not become confused in the public mind with the poem as a form, simply because they both employed language. In spite of the popularity and great immediate interest in journalism, the poem still holds its position (or at least such is my fervent hope) as a distinguished form of equal, if not superior, importance in man's culture; and although it may, in certain periods, be neglected, there is never an implication that, as a form, it can be replaced by any other, however pertinent, popular, or refined in its own terms.

I am distressed, for this reason, by the current tendency to exalt the documentary as the supreme achievement of film, which places it, by implication, in the category of an art form. Although an explicit statement of this is carefully avoided, the implication is supported by an emphasis upon those documentaries which are significant not for their scientific accuracy, but for an undertone of lyricism or a use of dramatic devices—values generally associated with art form. Thus the campaign serves not so much to point up the real values of a documentary—the objective, impartial rendition of an otherwise obscure or remote reality—but to cast suspicion upon the extent to which it actually retains those documentary functions. A work of art is primarily concerned with the effective creation of an idea (even when that may require a sacrifice of the factual material upon which the idea is based), and involves a conscious manipulation of its material from an intensely motivated point of view. By inference, the unconsidered and unmodified praise which has recently attended the documentarist requires of him, again by inference, that he function also in these latter terms.

In this effort he has not failed altogether. When the reality which he seeks to convey consist largely of human and emotional values, the perception of these and their rendition may require of the documentarist a transcription similar to that which I discuss elsewhere, when the art reality becomes independent of the reality by which it was inspired. "Song of Ceylon" (Basil Wright and John Taylor), sections of "Forgotten Village" (Steinbeck, Hackenschmied and Klein), "Bien Que Les Heures" (Cavalcanti), "Berlin" (Ruttman), the Russian "Turksib" and the early work of Dziga Vertov are among those documentaries which create an intensity of experience, and so have validity quite irrespective of their accuracy. They are the counter-part, in literature, of those travel-journals which inform as much of the subtleties of vision as of the things viewed or of those impassioned reportages which convince as much by the sincere emotion of the reporter as by the fact reported.

But the documentary film maker is not permitted the emotional freedom of other artists, or the full access to the means and techniques of this form. Since the subjective attitude is, at least, theoretically discouraged as an impediment to unbiased observation, he is not justified in examining the extent of his personal interest in the subject matter. And so he finds

himself occupied, to an enervating degree, with material which does not inspire him. He is further limited by a set of conventions which originate in the methods of the scientific film. He must photograph "on the scene" (often a very primitive one) even when material circumstances may hamper his techniques, and force him to select the accessible rather than the significant fact. He must use the "real" people, even if they are camera-shy or resentful of him as an alien intruder, and so do not behave as "realistically" as would a competent professional actor. If I were to believe in many of the documentaries which I have seen, I would deduce that most "natives" are either predominantly hostile, taciturn or simply ill-humored, and capable of mainly two facial expressions: a blank stupidity punctuated by periods of carnival hysteria. Even in our urban, sophisticated society, the portrait photographer inspires an uneasy rigidity. It would be a rare native indeed who, confronted by the impressive and even ominous mechanism of the camera and its accoutrements (and that in the hands of a suspect stranger), could maintain a normally relaxed, spontaneous behavior. These are but some of the exterior conditions rigidly imposed upon the documentary film maker, in addition to the creative problems within the form itself.

Yet the products created under these conditions are made subject, by the undefined enthusiasms of their main "appreciators," to an evaluation in terms usually reserved for the most creative achievements of other art forms. And so the documentarist is driven to the effort of satisfying two separate demands, which are in conflict. He fails, in the end, to completely satisfy either one or the other.

I am sure that few, if any, of the so-called documentaries would be acceptable as sufficiently objective and accurate data for either anthropologists, sociologists or psychologists. On the other hand, few, if any, are comparable in stature, authority, or profundity, to the great achievements of the other arts.

The documentarist cannot long remain oblivious of his ambiguous position. The greater his understanding of truly creative form, the more acute is his embarrassment at finding his labors evaluated in terms which he was not initially permitted or presumed to function. Whereas, formerly, he might have been able to maintain some middle ground, the insistence of the current campaign precipitates the basic conflicts, and forces upon him the necessity of a decision. It will succeed, in the end, in driving the more creative workers, embarrassed by the exaggerated, misdirected appreciation, out of the field. And it will be left in the hands of skilled technicians where, perhaps, it rightfully belongs.

Since these ideas are in opposition to the current wave of documentary enthusiasm, and would, perhaps, be ascribed to the prejudice of my own distance from that form, I should like to quote from an article by Alexander Hammid. He has been recognized as an outstanding talent in documentary film for 18 years, both here and abroad. He is the director of the "Hymn of the Nations" (the film about Toscanini) and other films for the OWI, and (as Alexander Hackenschmied) photographed and co-directed "Forgotten Village," "Lights Out in Europe," "Crisis," and a multitude of documentaries which have been circulated only in Europe. It therefore must

be admitted that he would be at least "conversant" with the problems of his field.

It is revealing that Mr. Hammid devotes considerable space to the fact that, in order to achieve a "realism" of effect, it is often necessary to be imaginative in method.

"In their (the early documentarists) drive towards objectivity, they brushed aside the fact that the camera records only in the manner in which the man behind it chooses to direct it. I believe that the necessity of subjective choice is one of the fundamentals of any creation. In other words, we must have command of our instrument. If we leave the choice to our instrument, then we rely upon the accident of reality which, in itself, is not reality. The necessity of choice and elimination which *eo ipso* are a denial of objectivity, continues throughout the entire process of film making;

. . . Many people believe that if there is no arrangement or staging of a scene, they will obtain an unadulterated, objective picture of reality

. . . But even if we put the camera in front of a section of real life, upon which we do not intrude so much as to even blow off a speck of dust, we still arrange: by selecting the angle, which may emphasize one thing and conceal another, or distort an otherwise familiar perspective; by selecting a lens which will concentrate our attention on a single face or one which will reveal the entire landscape and other people; by the selection of a filter and an exposure . . . which determine whether the tone will be brilliant or gloomy, harsh or soft . . . This is why, in films, it becomes possible to put one and the same reality to the service of democratic, socialist or totalitarian ideologies, and in each case make it seem realistic. To take the camera out of the studio, and to photograph real life on the spot becomes merely one style of making films, but it is not a guarantee of truth, objectivity, beauty or any other moral or esthetic virtue. As a maker of documentary films I am aware of how many scenes I have contrived, rearranged or simply staged . . . These films have been presented in good faith and accepted as a "remarkably true picture of life." I do not feel that I have deceived anyone, because all these arrangements have been made in harmony with the spirit of that life, and were designed to present its character, moods, hidden meanings, beauties and contrasts . . . We have not reproduced reality but have created an illusion of reality."

And Mr. Hammid pursues his observations with relentless logic—right out of the documentary field, as it is generally understood.

"I believe that this reality, which lives only in the darkness of the movie theater, is the thing that counts. And it lives only if it is convincing, and that does not depend upon the fact that someone went to the great trouble of taking the camera to unusual places to photograph unusual events, or whether it contained professional actors or native inhabitants. It lies rather in the feeling and creative force with which the man behind the camera is able to project his visions."

If we accept the proposition that even the selected placing of the camera is an exercise of conscious creativity, then there is no such thing as a documentary film, in the sense of an objective rendition of reality. Not even the camera in synchronization with the gun remains, for it could be argued that such an arrangement was itself a creative action. And, many docu-

mentarists, confronting in the principle of objectivity an implication of their personal, individual uselessness, salvage their ego and importance by a desperate reversal. They attempt to establish, as the lowest common denominator of creative action, the exercise of even the most miniscule discrimination.

If such a low denominator is not acceptable, does it become so according to the degree and frequency of selectivity? Such a gradation can be enormous, as Mr. Hammid's reference to angles, lenses, filters, lighting, suggests. In the final analysis, is creative action at all related to elements and the act of selection from them? For would not such a concept make creativity commensurate with the accessibility of elements, so that a man of broad experience would have a high artistic potential, whereas the shy, retiring individual would not? Or does it begin, as Mr. Hammid last implies, on a level different entirely, where the elements are re-combined, not in an imitation of their original and natural integrity, but into a new whole to thus create a new reality.

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For the serious artist the esthetic problem of form is, essentially, and simultaneously, a moral problem. Nothing can account for the devoted dedication of the giants of human history to art form save the understanding that, for them, the moral and esthetic problems were one and the same: that the form of a work of art is the physical manifestation of its moral structure.

So organic is this relationship that it obtains even without a conscious recognition of its existence. The vulgarity and cynicism, or the pompousness and self-conscious "impressiveness" of so many of the films of the commercial industry—these "formal" qualities are their moral qualities as well. Our sole defense against, for example, the "June-moon" rhymes and the empty melodies of Tin Pan Alley lies in the recognition that the "love" there created has nothing in common with that profound experience, known by the same name, to which artists have so desperately labored to give adequate, commensurate form.

And if the idea of art form comprehends, as it were, the idea of moral form, no one who presumes to treat of profound human values is exonerated from a moral responsibility for the negative action of failure, as well as the positive action of error.

Least of all are the documentarists exonerated from such judgment, for in full consciousness they have advanced, as the major plank of their platform, not an esthetic conviction but a moral one. They have accepted the burden of concerning themselves with important human values, particularly in view of the failure of the commercial industry to do so adequately. They stand on moral grounds which are ostensibly impregnable.

Yet it is my belief, and I think that I am not alone in this, that the documentaries of World War II illuminate precisely how much a failure of form is a failure of morals, even when it results from nothing more intentionally destructive than incompetency, or the creative lethargy of the "achieved" professional craftsman.

Surely the human tragedy of the war requires of those who presume to commemorate it—film-maker, writer, painter—a personal creative effort somehow commensurate in profundity and stature. Surely the vacant eyes and the desolated bodies of starved children, deserve and require, in the moral sense, something more than the maudlin clichés of the tourist camera or the skillful manipulations of a craftsman who brings to them the techniques developed for and suitable to the entertaining demonstration of the manufacture of a Ford car. Is it possible not to be violently offended to discover that all these inarticulate animal sounds of human misery, all the desperate and final silences can find no transcription more inspired and

exalted than the professional fluency of a well-fed voice and commentary. And how can we agree that the heroism of a single soldier is in the least celebrated by the two-dimensional record of his falling body; or that the meaning of his death is even remotely comprehended by whoever is capable of exploiting the ready-made horror of his mangled face, which he can no longer protect from the cynical intimacy, the mechanical sight of the camera.

Whether there will ever appear a spiritual giant, of the stature of a Da Vinci, who can create, out of his individual resources, the form of such gigantic tragedy is a question. Short of such achievement, the least requirement is a profound humility, and a truly immense, dedicated, creative effort which would begin with the conviction that any skill or technique which has served a lesser purpose is a priori inadequate for this one. Where even such considerations are absent—and they are absent from all the war documentaries which I have seen—the result is nothing less than a profanity in a profoundly moral sense.

During the war, the documentarists interpreted the great public interest as a triumph for their form. But after the photographs of skeletonized children, the horrors of Dachau, the burning Japanese soldier, the plunge into the very heart of fire—after all the violences of war—even the best intentioned reportages of matters perhaps equally important but less dramatic and sensational cannot but seem anti-climactic and dull.

On the other hand, the extension of realism into sur-realism, as a spontaneous projection of the inner reality of the artist—intact in its natural integrity—is impossible. Since it is the camera which actually confronts reality, one can theoretically achieve, at most, a spontaneity of the camera in recording, without conscious control or discrimination, the area that it is fixed upon. This naturalism is preserved only if the pieces of film are conscientiously re-combined into the relationship of the reality itself, as in documentaries. Moreover, since the camera records according to its own capacity, even the most personalized editing of this material cannot be taken as a free expression of the artist. Thus, while film may record a sur-realist expression in another medium, "film spontaneity" is impossible.

The Hollywood industry, its shrewdness undiverted by esthetic or ethic idealisms, knew (even before the war had ended) that only the imaginatively contrived horror or the fantastically artificial scene could capture the attention of a public grown inured to the realities of war.

To these ends, Hollywood had been itself primarily responsible for increasing the catalogue of elements which film has at its disposal for creative manipulation. In the spatial dimension it had access to the source material of the plastic arts. In the temporal dimension it had access to all movement, which could also be used to round out a two dimensional shape so that it functioned as a three-dimensional element. When sound was added, the linguistic elements upon which literature is founded, and also natural sound and music, were made available. Now, with the rapid development of color processes, still another dimension of elements is being proffered film.

My insistence upon the creative attitude, and the "un-natural" forms to which it gives rise, might seem to comprehend Hollywood films, which are obviously artificial in form. But film has access not only to the elements of

reality but also, and as part of reality, to the ready made forms of other arts. And Hollywood is as realistic in reference to these art realities—literature, drama, dance, etc.,—and as faithful to their original integrities, as the documentary is in reference to social reality. This is, moreover, a tendency which has grown with time.

The film producer, responsible for the success of a project in which increasingly enormous sums are usually invested, avails himself of material, methods and personnel which are already "tested and approved." Consequently, most films make use of the elements of reality not according to the film instrument, but as elements already part of an integrated art form.

As the film industry became secure and also subject to the scrutiny of French, British and German cultural criteria, it became culturally defensive, and interested in achieving "class" on an intellectual level. In typical "nouveau-riche" fashion, the studios began to buy some of the more "intellectual" writers almost in the way that a piano, prominently displayed, is widely used to lend an aspect of refinement to a home. And just as piano lessons are rarely pursued to the point of any real musical accomplishment or understanding, so I doubt that there has ever been any real intention to make use of the real capacities of the best writers. The Hollywood writer cannot be blamed for a reluctance to recognize or admit the humiliating, decorative purpose for which he receives his irresistible salaries and so is angry and bewildered at being forced to function in films on a level far below that which ostensibly induced the original bargain. There are times when this situation creates an impression of Hollywood as no less than a Dantesque purgatory from which rise, incessantly, the hysterical protests of violated virgins.

Nevertheless, the literary approach, encouraged by the use of verbal expression in sound, has set the pattern of film criteria in much the same way that token music lessons set the pattern of musical taste and account for the notion that the "light classic" composition is the "good music." It might have been better for films if the industry was never able to afford the cultural pretension of employing writers or buying literary works but were forced to continue in the direction of some early silent films. These emphasized visual elements and even sometimes, as in the comedies of Buster Keaton, displayed a remarkable, intuitive grasp of filmic form.

I do not intend to minimize the importance of literature or drama or of any of the art forms which film records; nor even to minimize the value of such records. On the contrary, just as I am deeply grateful to some documentaries for showing me a world which I may have been otherwise denied, so I am grateful to those films which make it possible for me to see plays which I could not have attended or the performances of actors now retired or dead.

But just as I do not consider documentary realism a substitute for the creative form of film proper, neither do I feel that this is accomplished by an extension of the recording method to cover the forms of any or all the other arts. The form proper of film is, for me, accomplished only when the elements, whatever their original context, are related according to the special character of the instrument of film itself—the camera and the editing—so that the reality which emerges is a new one—one which only film

can achieve and which could not be accomplished by the exercise of any other instrument. (If, on the face of it, this seems a stringent, purist or limiting requirement, then I can only point out that, far from inhibiting the other art forms, such a principle, in terms of their respective instruments, is most manifest in the greatest of their achievements.)

This critical relationship between form and instrument is the special concern of the section dealing with instruments; but it is impossible to make clear how a fiction film remains, even on film, a literary form, without reference to the manner in which instruments operate in creating a form.

In discussing the formal emergent whole of a work of art, I pointed out that the elements, or parts, lose their original individual value and assume those conferred upon them by their function in this specific whole.

Such redefined elements are then pre-disposed towards functioning in the respective form from which they derive. Consequently, even when a Hollywood writer aspires to film as a distinct medium, he usually begins with the literary and verbal elements to which he has been previously devoted. These encourage, if not actually impose, the creation of the very literary form which he has ostensibly refuted, as a principle, in film. For this reason it is usually impossible to distinguish whether film is an "original" (conceived specifically for filming) or an "adaptation" of a novel, or a novel preserved more or less intact.

The special character of the novel form is that it can deal in interior emotions and ideas—invisible conflicts, reflections, etc. The visual arts—and film is, above all, a visual experience—deal, on the contrary, in visible states of being or action. When a fictional character, whose meaning has been created by the development of his interior feelings and ideas, is to be put into a film, the first problem is: what should he do to show visibly what he thinks or feels—what is the activity best symptomatic of his feelings? This "enactment" must not take an undue length of time, and so certain "symptom-action" clichés are established. We have come to accept a kiss as a symptom-action of love, or a gesture of the hands thrown back as a symptom-action of an inner fear, etc.

Thus the Hollywood fiction film has created a kind of visual shorthand of clichés with which we have become so familiar that we are not even aware of the effort of transcription. As we watch the screen we continually "understand" this gesture to stand for this state of mind, or that grimace to represent that emotion. Although the emotional impact derives not from what we see, but from the verbal complex which the image represents, the facility with which we bridge the gap and achieve this transcription deceives us, and we imagine that we enjoy a visual experience. Actually, this has nothing in common with the directness with which we would experience a truly visual reality, such as falling, whose "symptomatic sensations" would have to represent it in a literary form.

The visual cliché acts, therefore, as a symbol, in the way that the cross is a symbol for the whole complex of ideas contained in the crucifixion. When we react emotionally to a cross, it is not to the visual character of the cross proper but to the crucifixion, to which the cross leads as a bridge of reference. It is true that symbols have been used in many works of art, but they have been drawn, always, from a firmly established mythology.

Moreover, the artist rarely relies upon such an exterior frame of reference. He is usually careful to reaffirm, in the immediate context of his work of art, those values which the object, as symbol, might have in exterior reference. It is impossible to maintain, for instance, that a good painting of the Madonna would fail to convey its devotional, exalted emotion even to someone ignorant of the symbolism employed.

The rapidity with which so many Hollywood films cease to make sense or carry emotional weight is an indication of their failure to create meaning in the direct visual terms of their own immediate frame of reference. The shorthand clichés which they employ, to bridge back to the literary terms in which the film is actually conceived, are drawn not from a recognized mythology but from superficial mannerisms which are transitory and soon lose their referential value. If the great works of art have succeeded in retaining their value even long after their symbols have lost their referential power it is precisely because their meaning was not entrusted, in the first place, to the frail bridges of the symbolic reference.

It is also a common belief that when a literary work contains many "images" it is especially well suited to being filmed. On the contrary, the better the writer, the more verbal his images . . . in the sense that the impact derives not from the object or events described, but from the verbal manner of their description. I take, at random, the opening paragraph of "The Trial" by Franz Kafka.

"Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K. for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning. His landlady's cook, who always brought him his breakfast at eight o'clock, failed to appear on this occasion. That had never happened before. K. waited for a while longer, watching from his pillow the old lady opposite, who seemed to be peering at him with a curiosity unusual even for her, but then, feeling both put out and hungry, he rang the bell. At once there was knock on the door and a man entered whom he had never seen before in the house."

In this paragraph the words are themselves simple; concrete; they describe a physical event in which both real actions and real objects are included. Yet I challenge anyone to create, in visual terms, the meaning which is here contained in no more than a moment's reading time.

In literature, when an image or an event is modified by the negative, as "failed to appear" or "had never seen before" they are endowed with a meaning impossible to achieve in visual terms by mere absence. Yet it is precisely this negative reference which is important in the paragraph quoted. In visual terms the time which would be required to first establish an expectation in order to disappoint it, would be so long and the action so contrived, as to contradict the very virtue of economy which is here achieved, and to unbalance, by the emphasis which time always brings to an event, the subtle structure of the work. Not only by the pathos and disappointment of negative modification, but by a thousand other verbal and syntactical manipulations, good literature remains verbal in its impact no matter how much it seems to deal with concrete situations and images. I would even go so far as to say that only that literature which fails to make creative use of its verbal instrument, could be made into a good film. And I would like to place this entire consideration before those writers who imagine that their

constant use of imagery in short stories and poetry would indicate an inhibited talent for film.

The comparative economy with which an emotion can be established in verbal or in visual terms is, as a matter of fact, a good indication of whether it is a verbal or a visual image for there are, on the other hand, visual moments, which contain such a rich complex of meanings, implications, over- and under-tones, etc., that only a labored and lengthy verbal description could begin to convey their impact. The immense difference between an accurate description of an experience and the experience itself must not be minimized.

In many films such indirection—the visual description of non-visual experiences—is concealed by a rococo of photographic "effects." For example a static sequence will be photographed from a dozen different angles, even when such a shifty point of view is not, emotionally or logically, justified. But all the photographic virtuosity in the world cannot make a visual form out of a literary concept.

Theater, unlike literature, is concerned with an exterior physical situation in which a verbal activity takes place; and the sound film is able to retain theater intact in its original terms. Similarly, dance retains its stage logic in film, music is composed in concert terms and remains unrelated to the other sounds of film except in an "accompanist," theatrical fashion. I think I have, perhaps, made my point which is, in any case, amplified in the section dealing with the film instrument.

And it seems to me that the development of a distinctive film form consists not in eliminating any of the elements—whether of nature, reality, or the artifices of other arts—to which it has access, but in relating all these according to the special capacity of film: the manipulations made possible by the fact that it is both a space art and a time art.

By a manipulation of time and space I do not mean such established filmic technique as flash-backs, parallel actions, etc. Parallel actions for instance—as in a sequence when we see, alternately, the hero who rushes to the rescue and the heroine, whose situation becomes increasingly critical—is an omni-presence on the part of the camera as a witness of action, not as a creator of it. Here Time, by remaining actually constant, is no more than a dimension in which a spatial activity can occur. But the celluloid memory of the camera can function, as our memory, not merely to reconstruct or to measure an original chronology. It can place together, in immediate temporal sequence, events actually distant, and achieve, through such relationship a peculiarly filmic reality. This is just one of the possibilities, and I suggest many others in a discussion of the instrument of film itself.

But it would be impossible to understand or appreciate a filmic film if we brought to it all the critical and visual habits which we may have developed, to advantage, in reference to the other art forms. On the other hand, since a film makes much use of natural reality, we may be inclined, by habit, to approach it as if it were, truly, a natural phenomenon, and proceed to select from it elements which we interpret according to some personal context, rather than the context which the film has carefully evolved. Or, accustomed to film as a record of another art form, we anticipate a literary-

symbolic logic. Just as, in waiting anxiously for a specific friend, we fail to recognize or even see the other faces in a crowd, so, in watching for some familiar pattern of relationship in a film we may fail to perceive the reality which is there created.

Another habit is the current tendency to psycho-analyse anything which deals in an imaginative reality. The special conditions of film production, where it is the camera which perceives and records, according to its capacity, introduces a non-psychological censor. The spontaneous associational logics of the artist cannot be retained intact by an instrument which eliminates certain elements by virtue of its mechanical limitations and introduces other elements by virtue of its refined optics, its ability to remember details which the sub-conscious might not have considered significant, its dependence upon weather conditions, its use of human beings in their own physical terms, etc. As a matter of fact, the less the artist collaborates with the instrument, with full consideration to its capacities, the more he will get, as a result, film which expresses mechanics of the camera, and not his own intentions.

It is not only the film artist who must struggle to discover the esthetic principles of the first new art form in centuries; it is the audience, too, which must develop a receptive attitude designed specifically for film and free of the critical criteria which have been evolved for all the older art forms.

Everything which I have said in criticism of film may create an image of severe austerity and asceticism. On the contrary, you may find me many evenings in the motion-picture theater, sharing with the other sleepers (for nothing so resembles sleep), the selected dream without responsibilities. The less the film pretends to profundity—the less it is involved in a mediocre compromise of ideas and emotions which might be otherwise important—and the more casually circus-like it is, the more it fills the role of an extremely economical, accessible divertissement; or, as with the documentary, a satisfaction of our curiosity about the world.

But in so well exploiting the reproductive potential of film, the makers have for the most part permitted this function to supplant and substitute for a development of film-form proper. The failure of film has been a failure of omission—a neglect of the many more miraculous potentials of the art instrument.

In directing my critical remarks at the Hollywood industry, I have made convenient use of familiar points of reference; but I do not concur in that naive snobbishness which places the European industries so far above it. It must never be forgotten that only the better foreign films are imported, and that we are therefore inclined to generalize from these, neglecting that the French neighborhood double-feature is on a much lower level. And because we see few foreign films, at long intervals, the acting and the camerawork seem exotically interesting and fresh. Actually, in terms of their own native soil, these films are often as cliché and conventionalized as ours, which incidentally, seem fresh and exotic to Europeans. It is true that French films, for instance, sometimes create a more subtle, introverted intensity, particularly in romantic relationships, than ours do; but I feel that this is not so much an expressly filmic virtue as a filmic fidelity to a reality both of French life and art, just as a healthy buoyancy is characteristic of many American expressions.

Above all it must never be forgotten that film owes at least as much to D. W. Griffith and Mack Sennett as to Murnau and Pabst of Germany, Melies and Delluc of France, Stiller of Sweden and Eisenstein of Russia. It is not my intention to enter, here, upon a discussion of the various styles of film-making. There are already many historical volumes on the subject. In all of them the Russian films occupy an important position, one which has created, again on the basis of a mere handful of selected achievements, a legendary notion of the Russian film industry as a whole. Although Eisenstein and his compatriots must be credited with an intensely creative extension of "montage" and other conventions (for these originally inspired methods have fallen into conventionalized usage) it must be remem-

bered that they were so inspired by its more casual, prior use by Griffith (to whom they themselves give due credit).

Even with montage, the all-over concept of the form as a whole of the Russian films is that of the literary narrative. And at the risk of seeming heretical, I feel that although "Potemkin" has sequences which are extremely impressive (Eisenstein is nothing if not impressive, usually ponderously so), for sheer profundity of emotional impact and for an intensely poetic concept of film, I find nothing there to equal various sequences in the much less publicized works of Dovzhenko, such as "Frontier" or "Ivan."

It is disappointing to find, even in the "experimental" field, that the infinite tolerance of the camera—its capacity to record whatever is put before it under many modifying conditions, is too great a temptation. The painter who has an earnest interest in spatial manipulations often continues, as a film-maker, to function according to his original plastic concepts. Using chiffon and other devices he may conscientiously restore to the laboriously perfected optics of the lens all the limitations which characterize human vision, so that he can then proceed to create again as a painter. He may compose his frame as one does a canvas, in the logics of simplified masses, lines and, as substitute for color, an arrangement of blacks, whites, and all possible gradations of gray. The results are, of course, inferior to painting. Many of the gradations which are intended as color are lost in the process of multiple reproduction—a problem which painters do not face.

Moreover, since after all this is a motion picture, he arrives eventually at that unpleasant moment when the image, finally, must move and will disarrange its studied composition. Still photographers, for instance, have learned how to translate time into spatial terms. But in film, the problem is inverted. Space must be given meaning over time. A careful attention to some of the "art" films photographed by still photographers reveals an actual discomfort with time, and movement is most frequently merely an uneasy moment of transition, accomplished as rapidly as possible, between two static spatial compositions.

The abstract film is also derived from painting, both in principal and in the person of its pioneers. Such films are, it seems to me, not so much films as animated paintings, for the creative abstraction itself takes place on the spatial, plastic plane—the plane of painting—and is then registered, as any other reality, upon the film. To abstract in filmic terms would require an abstraction in time, as well as in space; but in abstract films time is not itself manipulated. It functions, in the usual way, as a vacuum which becomes visible only as it is filled by spatial activities; but it does not itself create any condition which could be thought of as its own manifestation. For an action to take place in time is not at all the same as for an action to be created by the exercise of time. This may become clearer later when I discuss the camera as an instrument of invention in temporal terms.

Like the rest of his work, the film of Marcel Duchamp occupies a unique position. Although it uses geometric forms, it is not an abstract film, but perhaps the only "optical pun" in existence. The time which he causes one of his spirals to revolve on the screen effects an optical metamorphosis: the cone appears first concave, then convex, and, in the more complicated

spirals, both concave and convex and then inversed. It is Time, therefore, which creates these optical puns which are the visual equivalents, in "Anemic Cinema," for instance, of the inserted phrases which also revolve and, in doing so, disclose the verbal pun.

My main criticism of the concept behind the usual abstract film is that it denies the special capacity of film to manipulate real elements as realities, and substitutes, exclusively, the elements of artifice (the method of painting). It may be easier to make an abstract film by recording the movements of colored squares by ordinary photographic process; but even this is usually done one frame at a time, like a series of miniature canvasses. And it is possible to paint upon successive frames a successively larger or smaller square or circle which, when projected, will appear to approach or recede according to the plastic principles of painting. Many abstract films are painted directly on the celluloid. Any concept of film which can in theory and practice dispense with the use of both camera and editing does not seem to me to be, properly speaking, a film, although it may be a highly entertaining, exciting or even profound experience.

Realism and the artifices of other arts can be combined by photographing an imaginatively conceived action related to an obviously real location. For when the tree in the picture is obviously real, it is also understood as true, and it can lend its aura of reality to an event created by artifice beneath it. Such a delicate manipulation between the really real and the unreal is, I believe, one of the major principles of film form.

Nothing can be achieved in the art of film until its form is understood to be the product of a completely unique complex: the exercise of an instrument which can function, simultaneously, both in terms of discovery and of invention. Peculiar also to film is the fact that this instrument is composed of two separate but interdependent parts, which flank the artist on either side. Between him and reality stands the camera . . . with its variable lenses, speeds, emulsions, etc. On the other side is the strip of film which must be subjected to the mechanisms and processes of editing (a relating of all the separate images), before a motion picture comes into existence.

The camera provides the elements of the form, and, although it does not always do so, can either discover them or create them, or discover and create them simultaneously. Upon the mechanics and processes of "editing" falls the burden of relating all these elements into a dynamic whole.

Most film-makers rely upon the automatically explorative action of the camera to add richness to their material. For the direct contact between camera and reality results in a quality of observation which is quite different from that of the human being. For example the field of vision of the human eye is comparable to that of a wide-angle lens. But the focus of the eye is relatively selective, and, directed by the interests or anxieties of the human being, will concentrate upon some small part of the entire area and will fail to observe or to remember objects or actions which lie outside its circle of concentration, even though these are still physically within the field of vision.

The lens, on the other hand, can be focused upon a plane (at right angles to the camera) within the depth of that field and, everything in that plane

of focus, will be observed and recorded with impartial clarity. Under favorable light conditions, the depth of that plane can be enormously extended, so that the camera can record, in a single frame a greater richness of reality than the human eye would ever be aware of in a glance. The camera thus contributes a dimension of observation to photography by compensating for a prejudice of human vision. It does not discover, however, in the sense of revealing more than the most perfect or leisurely human vision could perceive.

It is shocking to realize how little the camera, as an instrument of discovery, has been exploited outside of scientific investigation, where the results remain in the hands of scientists as part of their data. Yet, to my mind, the sheer visual excitement of photographs taken through a microscope, for instance, transcend by far—in beauty of design, delicacy of detail, and a kind of miraculous perfection—most of the accidental or laboriously composed still lifes of vases, strings, and such objects. I refer anyone who wishes to spend an exciting afternoon to the photographs of ocean organisms, plant sections, cancerous growths, etc., which are on file at the Museum of Natural History in New York. I exclude from my criticism the handful of photographers who have, in the use of extreme enlargements, and similar techniques, shown a creative grasp of such possibilities.

The motion-picture camera, in introducing the dimension of time into photography, opened to exploration the vast province of movement. The treasures here are almost limitless, and I can suggest only a few of them. There is, for example, the photographic acceleration of a movement which, in reality, may be so slow as to be indiscernable. The climbing of a vine, or the orientation of a plant towards the sun are thus revealed to possess fascinating characteristics, qualities, and even a curiously "intelligent" integrity of movement which only the most patient and observant botanist could have previously suspected.

My own attention has been especially captured by the explorations of slow-motion photography. Slow-motion is the microscope of time. One of the most lyric sequences I have ever seen was the slow-motion footage of the flight of birds photographed by an ornithologist interested in their varied aerodynamics. But apart from such scientific uses, slow-motion can be brought to the most casual activities to reveal in them a texture of emotional and psychological complexes. For example, the course of a conversation is normally characterized by indecisions, defiances, hesitations, distractions, anxieties, and other emotional undertones. In reality these are so fugitive as to be invisible. But the explorations by slow-motion photography, the agony of its analysis, reveals, in such an ostensibly casual situation, a profound human complex.

The complexity of the camera creates, at times, the illusion of being almost itself a living intelligence which can inspire its manipulation on the explorative and creative level simultaneously. (I have just received from France a book entitled "L'Intelligence d'une Machine" by Jean Epstein. I have not yet read it, but the approach implied in the title and the poetic, inspired tone of the style in which Mr. Epstein writes of a subject usually treated in pedestrian, historical terms leads me to believe that it is at least interesting reading for those who share, with me, a profound respect for

the magical complexities of the film instrument.) A running leap has, with slight variations, a given tempo; slow-motion photography creates of it a reality which is totally unnatural. But a use of slow-motion in reference to a movement which can, in parts, be performed at a variable tempo, can be even more creative. That is, one can shake one's head from side to side at almost any rate of speed. When a fast turning is reduced, by slow-motion, it still looks natural, and merely as if it were being performed more slowly; the hair, however, moving slowly in the lifted, horizontal shape possible only to rapid tempos, is unnatural in quality. Thus one creates a movement in one tempo which has the qualities of a movement of another tempo, and it is the dynamics of the relationship between these qualities which creates a certain special effectiveness, a reality which can only be achieved through the temporal manipulation of natural elements by the camera as an art instrument. In this sense, such a shot is a new element which is created by the camera for a function in the larger whole of the entire film. Another example of a uniquely filmic element is the movement created by the reversal of a motion which is not, in reality, reversible. By simply holding the camera up-side-down (I cannot stop to explain the logic by which this occurs), one can photograph the waves of the ocean and they will, in projection, travel in reverse. Such film footage not only reveals a new quality in the motion of the waves, but, creates to put it mildly, a most revolutionary reality.

Such an approach is a far cry from what is usually understood by the cliché that the province of motion pictures is movement. Film-makers seem to forget that movement, as such, is already used very thoroughly in dance, and to a lesser degree, in theater. If film is to make any contribution to the realm of movement, if it is to stake out a claim in an immeasurably rich territory, then it must be in the province of film-motion, as a new dimension altogether of movement.

I have not, myself, had the opportunity of experimenting with sound, but I am convinced that an explorative attitude, brought to the techniques of recording, mixing, amplifying, etc., could create a wealth of original film-sound elements. Even in the process of developing film emulsion itself, lives the negative image, where the inversion of all values reveals the astonishing details and constructions which fall of visual consequence in the familiar values of the positive image.

The burden of my argument is that it constitutes a gross, if not criminal esthetic negligence to ignore the immense wealth of new elements which the camera proffers in exchange for relatively minute effort. Such elements, constituted already of a filmic dynamic of space and time relationships, (related to all other accessible elements), are the elements proper of the larger dynamic of the film as a whole.

I have already pointed out that the reproduction, on film, of the other art forms does not constitute the creation of a filmic integrity and logic. Just as the verbal logics of a poem are composed of the relationships established through syntax, assonance, rhyme, and other such verbal methods, so in film there are processes of filmic relationships which derive from the instrument and the elements of its manipulations.

As a matter of fact, the very methods which result in a failure of the other art forms in film may be the basis of creative action in film itself, once the effort to carry over the values of one to the other is abandoned. Such inversion is possible largely because film is a time-space complex of a unique kind.

Film has been criticized, from the point of view of dramaturgy, as lacking the integrity and immediacy of fine theater. It is pointed out that the limitations of the stage impose upon the playwright an economy of movement, an emphasis upon the construction and development of character and situation, and a creative attention to the verbal statement upon which the immediate burden of projection rests. The very mobility of the camera, it is said, encourages a lazy reliance on an essentially decorative use of scenery and realistic detail. A plot so dull that it would not hold the attention of the theater audience for more than a moment, borrows a superficial excitement from a frequent change of location, angles and similar movements of the camera. These also permit a neglect of verbal integrity and achievement. The insistent artificiality of the processes of film-making—the complicated and intense lighting, the unresponsive machinery, the interruptions of the action—make it virtually impossible for the performer to maintain the intensity and integrity of conviction which is so central to theater, or to achieve the vitality which results from his direct contact with his human audience.

I agree. I agree absolutely that film, as theater, is less satisfying an experience than theater as theater. But, on the other hand, the sly tendency of theater to, at times, imitate the methods (however unexploited) of film by a "realism" of setting, frequent changes of scene, and a panoramic idea of construction is neither good theater nor acceptable film.

(In my criticism of the panoramic construction I do not intend to include vaudeville variety shows, musicals or that supremely triumphant example of such construction: "Around the World in Eighty Days." These are part of a form completely separate from drama and are in the tradition of the "word battles" and the other contests of skills already developed to a high level (often higher than ours) in the tribal cultures of Africa, the Pacific, etc., where they also function as a socially adjusted exercise of individual exhibitionism.)

Moreover, it seems to me that many of the "technical" difficulties are at least compensated for by such advantages as the opportunity to repeat an action until its most perfect delivery is recorded for all time. It is true that theater does often function on a higher level than film-theater, but this is due not to technical qualifications but rather to the fact that, for theatrical presentation, plays do not gear themselves to a prescribed level guaranteed to return the amounts invested in a film. In addition and as a consequence, performers who are genuinely concerned with the profundity of their roles prefer to remain in the theater. These are the real reasons behind the loss of stature which plays so frequently suffer in being rendered into films.

This is a comparatively recent development. In the early days, the film industry was in complete disrepute: theatrical professionals considered it, for the most part, a vulgarity, and it had not yet proven its commercial

possibilities sufficiently to become seductive to them. It could not afford to buy rights, hire playwrights or trained actors, or indulge in a vast personnel and a division of labor. It had, consequently, to rely upon and develop its own resources.

The most frequent practice was to work with a very limited crew, most of whom had no previous professional standing to lose, and would therefore try anything. It was not uncommon, for example, to use almost everyone except the camera-man for extras in group scenes; or for the actress to design her own costume; or for the camera-man to suggest a preferable action; or for the director to take over the camera; etc. In this way, the films became a collaborative effort of the crew, rather than the current assembly-line product of a hierarchical, myopic division of labor. Above all, for sheer lack of writers who would deign to concern themselves with movies, the films were often "written" on the spot by the camera, according to a very skeletal, vague story plot. The masterpieces of Mack Sennett and Chaplin derive precisely from this procedure.

It was also responsible for the development of a peculiarly filmic concept—the personality film—as in the Pickford films or the vamp films. Although probably suggested by the vehicle plays of theater, it was actually, for a period, extended into a qualitatively different form. The special techniques of film—the concentrated close-up—and the special qualities of film projection—the overwhelming, intimate experience of a face as the sole, living reality in a total darkness—made possible an unprecedented exploitation of the very personality of an actress, from which the action of the plot itself emanated. Although it has now fallen into an unimaginative, pedestrian usage—as in the Grable films which must be propped up with songs, jokes, etc.—it also led to such achievements as "Joan of Arc" (Karl Dreyer). In keeping with a false concept of "refinement," the "better" films are now reverting to plays, playwrights, and play-actresses.

But I am sure that I am not alone in my deep affection for those films which raised personalities to almost a super-natural stature and created, briefly, a mythology of gods of the first magnitude whose mere presence lent to the most undistinguished events a divine grandeur and intensity—Theda Bara, Mary Pickford, Lillian Gish, Rudolph Valentino, Douglas Fairbanks, and the early Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Jean Harlow and Joan Crawford. (For another point of view on these figures, I recommend "The Hollywood Hallucination" by Parker Tyler.)

Moreover—to return to the dramaturgic criticisms—suppose that the fact that a camera can stop, wait indefinitely, and then start again, was used, not as substitute for the intermissions during which the stage scenery is shifted, but as a technique for the metamorphosis (implying uninterrupted continuity of time) in spatial dimension?

In the film dance which I have made, the dancer begins a large movement—the lowering of his extended leg—in a forest. This shot is interrupted at the moment when the leg has reached waist-level, and is immediately followed by a close-up shot of the leg in a continuation of its movement—with the location now the interior of a house. The integrity of the time element—the fact that the tempo of the movement is continuous and that the two shots are, in editing, spliced to follow one another without inter-

ruption—holds together spatial areas which are not, in reality, so related. Instead of being destructive to a dramatic integrity, the mobility of the camera and the interruption and resumption of action, here creates an integrity as compelling as that of the theater, but of a totally different quality.

There are many uniquely filmic time-space relationships which can be achieved. I can point, at random, to a sequence from another film, "At Land." A girl enters and crosses the frame at a diagonal. She disappears behind a sand dune in the foreground at the edge of the frame, and the camera, at this moment, actually stops operating. The girl walks away a considerable distance and takes her place behind a farther dune away. The camera then resumes its shooting and immediately begins to turn (in a panoramic movement) in the direction in which the girl just left the frame. Since it starts registering at the identical position at which it stopped, some five minutes before, there is no spatial indication of the time which has transpired, and consequently we expect to find the girl emerging the dune which had just concealed her. Instead, she emerges from the dune much more distant, and so the alienation of the girl, from the camera, exceeds the actual time which would have presumably been necessary. In this case, a continuity of space has integrated periods of time which were not, in reality, in such immediate relationship; just as in the previous example, time and space were inversely related, according to a similar principle.

To the form as a whole, such techniques contribute an economy of statement comparable to poetry, where the inspired juxtaposition of a few words can create a complex which far transcends them. One of the finest films I have seen, "Sang d'un Poète" (Blood of A Poet) comes from Jean Cocteau who, as a poet, has had long training in the economy of statement. It is a film which has, incidentally, suffered immensely at the hands of "critics" for in its condensation it contains enough springboards for the personal, creative interpretations of a convention of "analysts." And its meaning depends upon a good many immediately visual images and realities which the literary symbolists ignore either through choice or limited capacity.

It is possible for me to go on for pages, citing one example after another, where a dynamic manipulation of the relationships between film-time and film-space (and potentially, film-sound) can create that special integrated complex: film form. But descriptions of such filmic methods are obviously awkward in verbal terms. I hope that these explicit examples suffice to clarify the principle. Above all, I sense myself upon the mere threshold of an indefinitely large, if not infinite, range of potentialities in which, eventually, there will be revealed principles beside which my concepts may seem exceedingly primitive.

Such revelations will, in their time, be as appropriate to the state of the culture—its perception of reality, the methods and achievements of its manipulations, and the complex of emotional and intellectual attitudes which attend all of these—as the problems with which I have here concerned myself, seem now to be.

The theory of relativity can no longer be indulgently dismissed as an abstract statement, true or false, of a remote cosmography whose pragmatic action remains, in any case, constant. Since the 17th century the heavens—

with God and His will—and the earth—with man and his desires—have rapidly approached each other. The phenomena which were once the manifestations of a transcendent deity are now the ordinary activities of man. A voice penetrates our midnight privacy over vast distance—via radio. The heavens are crowded with swift messengers. It is even possible to bring the world to an end. From the source of power must emanate also the morals and the mercies. And so, ready or not, willing or not, we must come to comprehend, with full responsibility, the world which we have now created.

The history of art is the history of man and of his universe and of the moral relationship between them. Whatever the instrument, the artist sought to re-create the abstract, invisible forces and relationships of the cosmos, in the intimate, immediate forms of his art, where the problems might be experienced and perhaps be resolved in miniature. It is not presumptuous to suggest that cinema, as an art instrument especially capable of recreating relativistic relationships on a plane of intimate experience, is of profound importance. It stands, today, in the great need of the creative contributions of whomsoever respects the fabulous potentialities of its destiny.